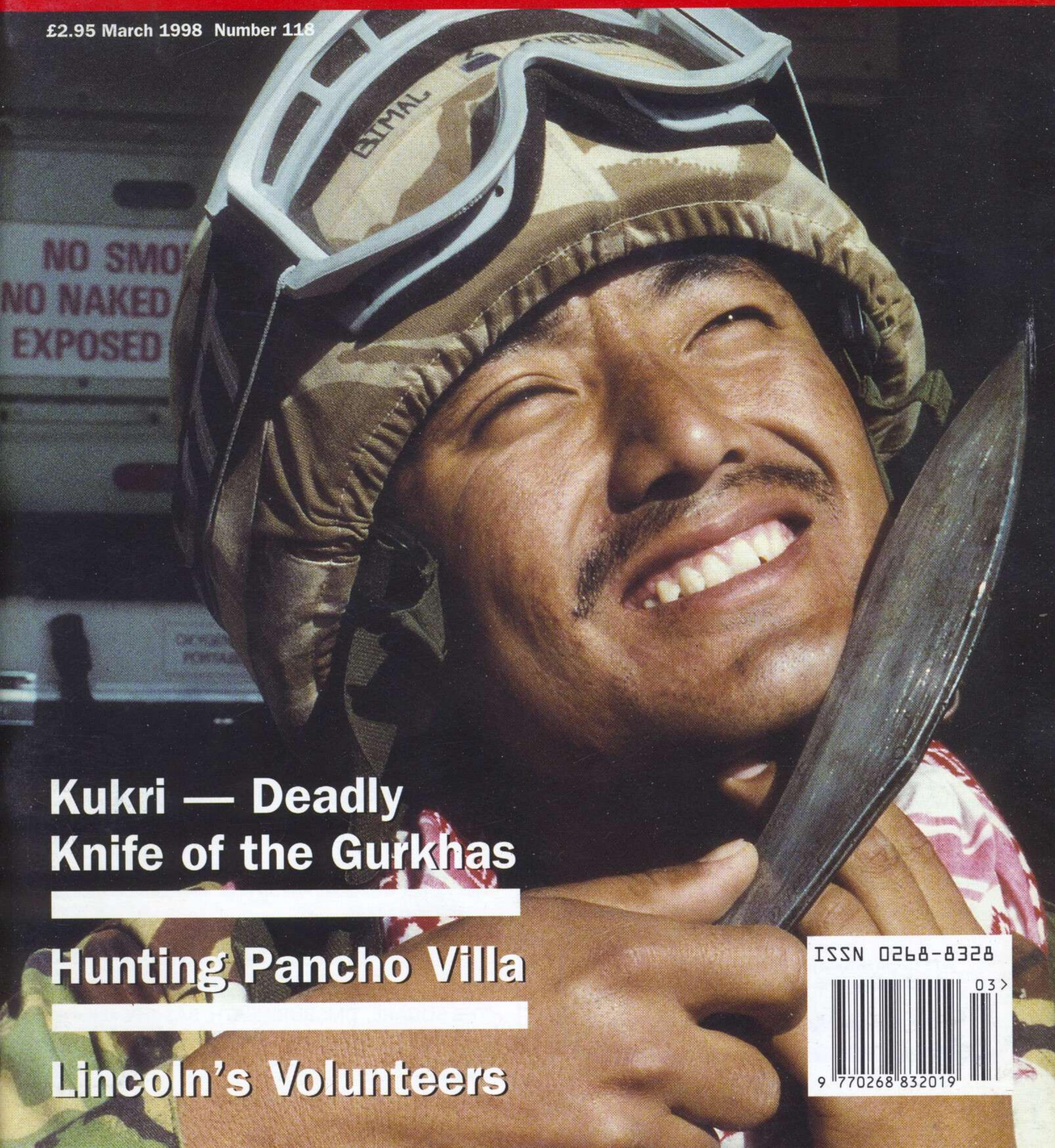


WARGAMING • DONALD FEATHERSTONE'S FAVOURITE BATTLE

# MILITARY ILLUSTRATED

£2.95 March 1998 Number 118



**Kukri — Deadly  
Knife of the Gurkhas**

**Hunting Pancho Villa**

**Lincoln's Volunteers**

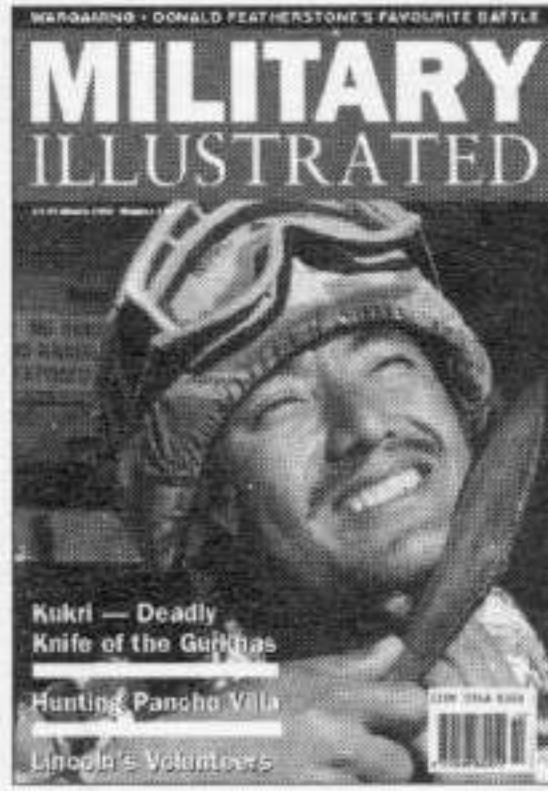
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# Military Illustrated

Past & Present



Gurkha, Gulf War, symbolically scrapes away desert sand with his kukri to mark ceasefire. (Mike Weston/SOLDIER magazine)

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# Readers' Letters

MI readers are invited to write to the Editor. Letters should be addressed to: Tim Newark, Military Illustrated, 43 Museum Street, London WC1A 1LY

## Fancy Dress

In Number 114, November 1997 I read with interest Stuart Reid's excellent article on 'Buying your way in' and I learned a lot. I enjoyed the photograph of the Ensign of a Royal Regiment c 1745, from which I learned that ensigns wore antique English Civil War carbine belts to support their colours and that private men were armed with *Short Land Pattern* Brown Besses, wore modern spectacles, had short back and sides or could grow beards, moustaches and sideburns if they wished. Quite a lot of information from one photograph. How can we readers take seriously misleading illustrations of fancy dress when attached to an indubitably serious article?

Gerry Embleton, Switzerland

## British Model Soldier Society Annual Show

The show is on Saturday 25th April 1998 and is open from 10.30am to 6.00pm at the New Connaught Rooms, Great Queen Street, Holborn, London. Entrance £3.00 Adults, 50p under 16, members £2.00. Near to Covent Garden and Holborn Underground stations, a short walk from Waterloo Rail station. Bus routes: 7, 30, 68, x68, 168, 171, 501 and 505. Organiser Peter Ledger, tel: 0181 590 7812.

Alex Riches, Publicity Officer BMSS

## Foreign Legion

Researcher-Collector seeking information and memorabilia re: ex UK Foreign legionnaires viz. J F Elkington, S Murray, A R Cooper, A Ritchie, etc.

G Christian, 3849 Bailey Ave, Bronx, NY 10463 USA

## Fife Military History Society

Fife Military History Society is an organisation open to all persons over the age of 16 with an interest in military history. The society does not promote the glorification of war, but provides a forum for anyone interested in military history in the widest sense. Interests of the society's current members include regimental histories, campaign and battle studies, World War II airfields, Airborne Forces, The American Civil War, Volunteer Forces and Roman Fortifications, to name but a few.

Meetings are held monthly, and the society has a programme of lectures and equipment displays which are staged by members and guest speakers. The Society also carries out visits to places of interest to the military historian such as Regimental Museums as well as field trips to modern and former military installations. For further information contact the Society's Chairman, John Smith on 01592 753754, or write to him at 10 Dunvegan Court Glenrothes Fife KY6 2BL.

## Crimean War Research Society

The Society exists to encourage research into every facet of the Crimean War, 1853-1856, and new members are always welcome. We are based in the UK, but have members scattered world-wide, including many in the USA. We research uniforms, medals, orders of battle, unit histories, and personal histories and accounts; and some members also wargame the War using both figures and boardgames. We have a number of Special Publications and Information Sheets, and members also receive our illustrated journal *The War Correspondent*.

The current subscription is £12 (UK) and £17 Sterling for other overseas members. If you would like to join us, please send a cheque for the appropriate amount, made payable to 'The Crimean War Research Society', to the Secretary: David Cliff, 4 Castle Estate, Ripponden, West Yorkshire HX6 4JY, UK. A list of our publications and any back numbers of the journal owing for the current year will then be forwarded to you.

## 95th Rifles

The 95th; or Rifle Regiment, Re-enactment and Living History Society requires a bugle major, buglers and military musicians to form band and bugles for the above Regiment of the Napoleonic Association.

For further information apply to the Band President on 01737 360561. Prospective riflemen and camp followers can also apply to join this living history society.

Lt Col D J Butlin

# Enough is

SIR GEORGE YOUNG is the Shadow importance of NATO to our defence TIM NEWARK gets the Conservativ

Sir George Young became an MP in 1974 and since then has served in government under two Prime Ministers. Appointed Shadow Secretary of State for Defence by William Hague, the opposition leader, he has since made several trips abroad, including Bosnia, to get the frontline views of Britain's soldiers.

## What do you see as the future military threats to Britain over the next thirty years?

There is no longer one threat from one recognised enemy. We're confronted with a range of threats from international terrorism, instability within countries like Bosnia, and extreme religious fundamentalism. Less easily defined, less easily focused.

## What about a united Islamic superpower?

That would be a risk if it were to happen, but they are some way from uniting if you look at each country and the instability inside it. Before they united with each other they would have to unite themselves. What you might get are alliances across national boundaries based on religion. There would be concern if there was an armed alliance among Islamic states, but I believe we are some way away from that.

## What about China?

If you look at China they don't have a lot of reason for military expansion. Not short of space, they simply want to increase prosperity and trade and build up alliances. I don't see a strong military threat to this country from China. There are all sorts of frontier issues among countries that border China in which we don't have a direct interest and I would suggest we don't get too heavily involved. If there were signs of an imperialist China investing heavily in arms then that is something NATO would want to keep an eye on.

All these threats are possible long-term threats and somewhat lets the government off the hook as it only really has to concern itself with its own lifespan, say the next ten years. Does that not encourage short-termism when it comes to military expenditure?

# Enough

Secretary of State for Defence and believes strongly in the defence cuts by a Labour government could threaten this point of view.

## Encouraging a policy of cuts and shifting money to immediate domestic concerns?

Defence cuts are not okay. Our discussion so far shows we need a flexibility of response. It also underlines the need for a strong NATO, an alliance of like-minded democracies so we can pool our resources. There is a real risk of being lulled into a false sense of security by the disappearance of the Russian threat. It is a very dangerous argument to say that because things have changed we can cut back on defence.

We took a peace dividend and then drew a line at a base defence budget of twenty billion pounds. I believe the treasury will now have a go at that and a Labour government is less inclined to defend defence expenditure than we were. The government faces too many difficult domestic decisions to leave the defence budget alone and so I am worried there will be a big hit on the defence budget this year which will make it more difficult for us to play our key role in NATO and the Security Council and fulfil our obligations to defend this country.

## Does the move towards European Union undermine NATO?

The Conservative party's policy is not to give the European Union a defence competence and to rely on NATO. NATO comprising of two pillars, a European pillar and an American one. We want to strengthen the European pillar of NATO. We have resisted those within the European Union who want to expand foreign policy and defence competence. We must encourage the enlargement of NATO. If the European Union developed a defence role, it would give the Americans the excuse to withdraw from any involvement with Europe. The Conservative party is very anxious that NATO remains the means of defending Europe.

## NATO certainly diffuses any shift of military power towards a France-Germany axis.

We see the role of the European Union as primarily economic, doing what they do best. We believe in subsidiarity, individual countries doing what they do best, and NATO does what NATO does best. It

doesn't make a lot of sense to have duplication by one institution performing functions which another institution does better and was set up to do. NATO is a single-minded agency. The European Union is not so single-minded. Our view is that defence is so crucial that we really shouldn't take risks with it and hand it over to an organisation that often finds it difficult to come to a decision on key issues. Also, the French-German axis is very strong within the European Union, whereas the US-UK axis is very strong within NATO and so we would feel more comfortable with that.

## Do not cuts in the traditional structure and ways of the army, from artificial bearskins to the amalgamation of regiments, effect the morale of the British soldier?

I think the Strategic Defence Review is hitting morale because of the uncertainty. Everything is being looked at including contracts for procurement which may be cancelled. No one is certain what will emerge and that does undermine morale, which in turn makes it very difficult to recruit more people. We wondered whether the review was really necessary, where everything is under debate. What I think matters at the end of the day is will this impair the operational efficiency of the armed forces? If you come up with something that may save a small amount of money but it hits morale and it makes it difficult to recruit, making soldiers, sailors and airmen feel less valued, then we should think hard before we do it. Morale is crucial to the armed forces. They have to feel they are doing a worthwhile job and they have government and public support. That has to be the question you ask before you do anything. What will be the impact on the chaps in the frontline?



## Does the new emphasis on the role of humanitarian operations risk turning soldiers into welfare workers?

I've just come back from Bosnia where a lot of the work is humanitarian and if it follows on from military intervention and is something a soldier can do best, that's okay, but if there is no security involvement then it should be left to civil agencies. What a soldier wants is a clearly defined mission.

## What can the Labour government get wrong?

I think the big question is the Strategic Defence Review. What they could get wrong is cutting back on defence and weakening our position in NATO, in the Security Council, and our capacity to respond with our allies. At the moment, if you talk to soldiers they feel they are overstretched. The gaps between tours are not what they ought to be and they need more equipment. They will be very worried to hear they are to keep their commitments but receive less money. That's the risk the current government runs, under-resourcing the armed forces for short term domestic reasons without relieving them of their international commitments.

# Books

**US Handguns of World War II: the Secondary Pistols and Revolvers**, by Charles W Pate; Andrew Mowbray Inc pp 368, illustrated, ISBN 0-917218-75-2, \$39.

This volume is undoubtedly one of the most interesting and substantial weapons books to appear for some time, and not merely because it is packed with raw data, and is both well produced and lavishly illustrated at a reasonable price. For this reviewer its fascination lies in many of the more obscure pieces of information that it contains. There are, for example, sections on holsters and accessories; markings; the Hi-Standard and Woodsman pistols which saw use with special forces; and a particularly interesting piece, produced with the assistance of David Penn of the Imperial War Museum, on 'Lend Lease' pistols sent to Britain.

This much one might have expected, but there is much more, some of it truly bizarre. For example how about the 'Bobby' revolver, made in America but ostensibly aimed at the British police market? If this were not strange enough there is a newspaper story from 1944 detailing how a US airman claimed to have shot down a German fighter with his six shooter, and reference to an Iver Johnson revolver, the advertising for which stated that it was perfectly safe even when struck with a hammer.

One feature of the book which is a little puzzling at first glance is the title, for the work covers all US handguns used in World War II, with the exception of the famous .45, Colt Model 1911. In many ways it would have made sense to include a chapter on this gun thereby making the title simpler, and perhaps attracting a bigger market. Nevertheless this book is a delight to own, and is a valuable reference for anyone with an interest in pistols or Allied firearms of World War II.

Certainly to be recommended.  
*Stephen Bull*

**William Spencer, Records of the Militia & Volunteer Forces 1757-1945**, Public Record Office Readers' Guide No 3 (1997) £7.99, paperback pp87, ISBN 1 873 162 44 8.

No one who has used the Public Record Office at Kew recently can be in any doubt about the popularity of family history as a leisure interest. Since most of us do not have ancestors who were rich and famous (or for that matter poor and notorious), the existence of military records can represent one of the best chances of finding out something about our forebears. In this century of total war there can be few families in Britain who have not had some connection with the Armed Forces. This little book covers records of the auxiliary forces, including the Militia, Volunteers, Yeomanry, Territorials and Home Guard. An updated version of an earlier book, it provides a clear and user-friendly guide to the documents of auxiliary forces held in the Public Records Office. The reproduction of attestation forms and the like, and the case studies of the service of individual soldiers, are particularly interesting. Although seemingly aimed primarily at the genealogist, anyone researching into the British army of the last two hundred years will find this book immensely helpful. This is very much a publication for the specialist, but nonetheless an important and fascinating one.  
*G D Sheffield*

**Warriors of the Steppe** by Erik Hildinger; Spellmount; 260 pp. Some b/w and maps; ISBN 1873376731; £19.95.

The Turkic and Mongol warriors of central Asia have had a long and terrific reputation as conquerors of civilisation. From the Scythians of the ancient world, through the Huns and

Avars, to the Turks and Mongols of later centuries, there has been a consistent military culture shared between all these tribesmen, namely that of horses and bows, and it is good to see a work that brings all these threads together in one survey of central Asian 'barbarians'. This is a good opportunity too for cross-referencing, so one can employ known facts about the performance of later steppe warriors to illuminate those less well recorded, for example, comparing the Crimean Tatars of the 17th century with the Huns. Such a process, however, could have been taken further, indeed, right up until today, comparing the present inhabitants of central Asia with their forefathers. Hildinger is perhaps a little premature when he writes of the end of these steppe warriors, for the guerilla gangs of central Asia today, whether they be Chechens, Afghans or Turkomans, still cast fear into the hearts of their more settled neighbours.  
*Tim Newark*

**Major and Mrs Holt's Battlefield Guide to the Ypres Salient** by Tonie and Valmai Holt (Leo Cooper, £14.95) ISBN 0 85052 551 9.

With the release of two film adaptations of recent 1914-18 novels and the coming eightieth anniversary of the armistice, visits to the First World War battlefields will probably steadily increase over the next twelve months. Many of these visitors will undoubtedly be new to battlefield touring and consequently books such as *Major and Mrs Holt's Battlefield Guide to the Ypres Salient* will be in demand. For the first time visitor to Flanders this glossy 250 page volume (just like its companion volume about the Somme) is probably the book that many travellers will reach for to help make the most of a couple of days on the battlefield. The historical summary of the battle, the fold out map and the

itineraries are all carefully thought out and provide interesting information for those who cannot afford the time to research the battle themselves and put together their own tour. This said, the book contains very little about what actually happened during the fighting in the salient and instead (as the authors themselves admit) provides only information about 'the main features, memorials, museums and cemeteries of the Ypres Salient'. This guide, therefore, by failing to usefully relate the ground to what happened on it during the fighting, misses a great opportunity. Battlefields need to be brought to life and not treated merely as soulless open air museums. Although this is most easily done by a well qualified guide leading a small party on a tour, this can also be done on paper, something that, unfortunately, the Holt's guide fails to even attempt. As a result this book will be a blessing for anybody wishing to go to the Ypres Salient and look at the sights, but it will disappoint those looking for a guide which usefully relates the present day battlefield to the military actions that took place there.  
*Lloyd Clark*

**Inside the Great Tanks** by Hans Halberstadt; ISBN 1 85915 014 4. Published by Windrow & Greene Ltd, 5 Gerrard Street, London W1V 7LJ. 128 pages, hardback. Price £25.00.

There are a number of public and several private collections of AFVs on display, but few people get the chance to examine the vehicles in detail. It is thus good to see that American collectors Jacques Littlefield has allowed some of his vehicles to be recorded in print for the rest of us. Though the main coverage is photographic, with superb colour photos throughout showing each tank outside with some unusual views and perspectives, text and captions include much to be

The best new military books from  
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### GREECE AND ROME AT WAR

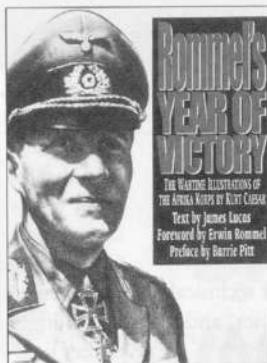
by Peter Connolly

This major reference book, illustrated throughout in full colour, vividly charts twelve centuries of military development and is a powerful study of the military might of ancient Greece and Rome.

With chapters on organisation, tactics, armour and weapons, fortifications and artillery, and much more, the armies of Greece, Macedon and Rome, and those of their enemies, are brought vividly to life.

281 x 219mm; 320 pages; 350 colour illustrations, 38 maps.

ISBN: 1-85367-303-X. £25.00.



### ROMMEL'S YEAR OF VICTORY

The Wartime Illustrations of the Afrika Korps by  
Kurt Caesar

Text by James Lucas

Foreword by Erwin Rommel

Preface by Barrie Pitt

This unique pictorial history of the Western Desert campaign features superb, evocative artwork by the German war artist Kurt Caesar and a detailed analysis of this fast moving conflict from the German perspective by James Lucas.

The illustrations, most of which are now published for the very first time, were made during the course of the campaign itself and capture the harsh conditions and hard fighting of this dramatic and decisive confrontation.

276 x 213mm; 176 pages; 70 illustrations. ISBN: 1-85367-302-1. £25.00.

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# TOO OLD TO FIGHT



### TOO PROUD TO ASK

Nepal, home of Mt. Everest the highest peak in the world, is also home of the Gurkhas, the legendary soldiers. Renowned for their loyalty, the Gurkhas have won 13 Victoria Crosses for conspicuous bravery. The Gurkhas have served the British Crown since 1815. Gurkhas served in both World Wars, and their sons and grandsons continue to serve the British Army.

Always serving abroad, they return home to one of the poorest countries in the world, which has no state welfare system, and where natural disasters are common-place. For these Gurkhas, retirement and old age means a continued struggle to exist. Many ex-Gurkhas do not even have a Service pension. We help over 11,000 each month and need to help more. Please help them face the hardships and challenges of home.

I would like to help these proud and gallant people who served Britain so well. Please accept my donation by cheque/PO (delete as applicable) to The Gurkha Welfare Trust.

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# Faces Behind the Books

*Military Illustrated* interviews some of the leading publishers and editors of military history books. This month, we talk to Leo Cooper, founder of *Pen & Sword Books*.

## **How did you get started in military publishing?**

I got started in military publishing when I was working at Hamish Hamilton. I invented a series called *Famous Regiments* which was an attempt to encapsulate the history of every Regiment in the British Army. I finally achieved 79 volumes but they priced themselves out of the market. It was on the back of this series that I set up my own imprint some 30 years ago and I think I am right in saying that it is probably the leading military imprint in the country now.

## **Which is the military book you are most proud of publishing?**

The military book or books I am most proud of publishing are Volumes I - VIII of Lord Anglesey's magnificent *History of British Cavalry*. This has recently been awarded the Chesney Gold Medal from the Royal United Services Institute and the first two volumes are in the process of reprinting for the second time. The other book I am proud of is Ronald Lewin's *Life of Slim*.

## **Which are your favourite military books of all time?**

My favourite military books of all time are as follows: *In Flanders Fields* by Leon Wolfe; *The Wreck of the Isabella* by David Miller; *Commando* by Denys Reitz; *No Picnic* by Major General Julian Thompson.

## **What are your major interests outside of military publishing?**

My chief interests outside publishing are Rugby Football, Cricket and anything to do with military affairs other than military publishing. I am also passionately fond of music.

## **Which books are you looking forward to publishing over the next year?**

The book I am looking forward to publishing this year

more than anything else is Ewen Southby-Tailyour's *Life of Blondie Hasler*, the famous Cockleshell Hero and navigator. I shall be publishing about 30 or 40 books in the coming year and all my babies are swans rather than geese and apart from anything else I'd prefer not to single out other titles.



learned there as the balance of words and images is well done.

Choice of subjects is dictated by those vehicles in fully restored condition. They begin which Second World War subject, a British Matilda, American M4A1 Sherman — in fact a Canadian Grizzly which the author points out when so many seem to confuse the two — Stuart M5A1, M3A1 Scout Car, M2A1 and M16 Half-tracks — all widely used under Lend-Lease — Czech/German Hetzer tank destroyer and Russian T-34-85. The post-war section has the M37 Howitzer Motor Carriage, Russian T-55 and the US Sheridan. Modern designs are represented by a T-72 from Russia via Czechoslovakia and two still-serving American designs — not in the Littlefield collection — M60A3 Patton and M1 Abrams.

Main features of each are related, with road tests showing how each performs and accounts of their use in action. Some idea of what it is like to be a modern crewman on an M1 Abrams and an account of tank layout and

design illustrated by close-ups of suspension systems and engines forms an introduction to the main business. For the older hands, this is a chance for a nostalgic look to their old vehicles while seeing what came after, while for the serving crewman it is a depiction of their world contrasted with that of an earlier generation which may well surprise both. Presentation is second to none which is a justifiable reason for its fairly high price. Some subjects are not strictly tanks but they are all classic armour and the book is well worth seeking out.

*Peter Brown*

**The Colt Model 1905 Automatic Pistol** by John Potocki, Andrew Mowbray Publishers, PO Box 460, Lincoln RI 02865 USA; pp 192; illustrated; ISBN 0-917218-76-0; \$28.

This is another well produced and highly specialised little volume from Mowbray's relevant to anyone with a serious interest in firearms. The Model 1905, though never produced in great

numbers, was significant as the precursor to the much more famous Model 1911, to which it bears considerable resemblance. As one would expect, the book includes a good deal of technical data, production statistics, and a survey of surviving examples. Interestingly however the saga of the Model 1905 semi automatic pistol is as much the story of the .45 'Auto Colt Pistol' cartridge as it is that of the gun.

The advent of this hefty 'man stopper' of a round was brought about due to some alarming incidents in Cuba and the Phillipines where US .38 cartridges simply failed to bring down the opposition. By way of illustration Potocki includes in his work the story of Antonio Caspi, who was shot three times in the chest, once in the arm, and yet still required subduing with a blow from a carbine butt. Even after such treatment the man survived to be handed over to the 'civil authorities'. There was clear agreement that American forces required a more effective pistol, and that this pistol should chamber a more powerful round.

Fascinating, if gruesome, data on how the .45 was decided on is given with the inclusion of a full facsimile of the Thompson-La Garde report. This harrowing document details how, with brutal if empirical simplicity, the testers fired a variety of military pistols current at the time into human cadavers and live animals. The remarkable conclusion to this apparently unscientific procedure was the then heretical conclusion that effectiveness against live targets was more a function of the diameter and mass of the projectile than its velocity. So it was that the .45 ACP round was adopted, and an existing Browning pistol design was modified to accept the cartridge. The result was the Model 1905.

Potocki's conclusions may not all be new, and books packed with facts and figures are not necessarily easy to absorb, but this book repays the effort. It is also very good value when one considers the difficulty of obtaining the research material. A sobering read, but there is much here to be recommended.

*Stephen Bull*

# Lincoln's Volunteers

When Abraham Lincoln called for volunteers to defend the union, the response was overwhelming. GUSTAV PERSON and his fellow living historians have recreated one of these volunteer units and reconstructs their appearance on campaign.

On 2 July 1862, as a result of the Shenandoah Valley campaign and the reverses suffered on the Peninsula, President Abraham Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 additional Union volunteers for three year enlistments.<sup>1</sup> A quota of regiments was assigned to each Northern state. One of the units raised as a result of that call was the 119th New York Volunteers, which began recruiting during the third week of August. The regiment recruited primarily in New York City, but entire companies were organized in Schenectady and on Long Island.

Company H recruited in Hempstead in Queens County, which at that time included the present Nassau County. Recruiting was so good that by the time the regiment formally mustered-in to Federal service on 5 September, Company H contained 104 members.

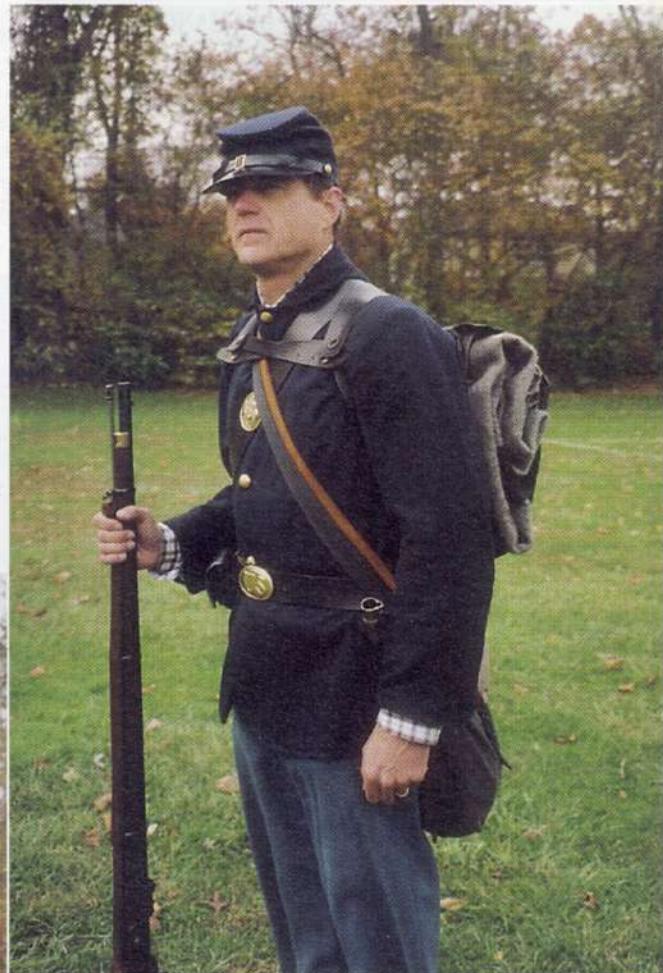
Commanding the company was Captain Benjamin Willis, a young attorney from Roslyn, Long Island, who went on after the war to have a distinguished political career.

The regiment assembled at Turtle Bay in Manhattan, site of the present United Nations building, where they were known as the Halleck Guard. The first commander was Colonel Elias Peissner, who was later killed at Chancellorsville.

After a period of organisation and drill at New York, the regiment travelled to northern Virginia to join the Army of the



Potomac. They missed the battle of Fredericksburg in December, and spent the winter in quarters with the XI Army Corps. their first large action was at Chancellorsville



Above: The author (Lorenzo Carman) in full marching order. This is how an infantryman in the Army of the Potomac appeared in 1862. Clearly seen at cuffs and collar is a plaid civilian shirt. The cap pouch was worn to the right of the brass belt buckle. Notice that the knapsack vertical straps are secured across the breast.

Left: Back view of full marching order, 1862. When carried, the greatcoat would be rolled and strapped to the top of the knapsack. The company letter and roster number markings can be seen on the canteen. Markings on the haversack and knapsack were painted on the inside flaps. The tin cup could be carried in a variety of positions. The Enfield rifle-musket is being carried at the position of right shoulder shift arms.

where the regiment, after an initial stout resistance, was driven from the field with the rest of the corps as a result of Jackson's flank attack on 2 May. By June 1863, sickness, desertion and battle casualties had reduced the regiment to 300 officers and men. They fought on the first day at Gettysburg and were again driven back from the northern part of the field after a spirited defense just north of the town.<sup>2</sup>



In late September 1863, the XI and XII Army Corps were ordered to the west as a consequence of the Federal defeat at Chickamauga. Joining Grant's army in Tennessee, they took part in raising the siege of Chattanooga and in the battle of Lookout Mountain in November.

By April 1864, further reorganisation resulted in the consolidation of the XI and XII Corps to form the XX Corps under Major General Joseph Hooker. The regiment was assigned to the 2nd Division under Major General John Geary.<sup>3</sup> As such, they took part in the Atlanta campaign under William Tecumseh Sherman. The 119th was the first Federal unit to enter that city after its surrender, and the regiment's National Colour was hoisted to the top of the city hall.

Following a period of rest and occupation duty at Atlanta, the XX Corps formed part of the Left Wing under Major General Henry Slocum in the march to the sea beginning in November 1864. Arriving in Savannah, Georgia, they assisted in capturing that city and then started north with Sherman through the Carolinas. Sherman's troops captured the South Carolina capital at Columbia and then continued on into North Carolina where the 119th participated at the battle of Bentonville, the last major battle in the western theater, in March 1865. The



regiment was present at General Joseph Johnston's surrender and then, with the war at an end, marched to Washington DC where they paraded in the Grand Review on 24 May 1865.

The surviving original three year men were mustered-out on 7 June 1865 at Bladensburg, Maryland. The remainder were re-assigned to the 102nd New York Volunteers.<sup>4</sup> The men of Company H returned to their homes on Long Island, satisfied that they had performed honourable and distinguished service, and anxious to resume their lives at work or school.

#### The Association

In 1980 a number of living historians, some affiliated with the Old Bethpage Village Restoration, banded together to form the Company H 119th New York Volunteers Historical Association. Dedicated to preserving the life and history of the Union Soldier, they take part in school programs, lectures, various other educational exhibitions, parades, encampments and re-enactments.

**Far left:** Private Tom Creamer (Edwin Burton), one of Sherman's 'bummers', in Union army dress during the March to the Sea in Autumn, 1864. He is wearing a nine-button Federal Issue shell jacket. A black slouch hat has replaced the forage cap and he is carrying a Model 1861 Springfield in place of the Enfield. Spare clothing and other items have been rolled into a Federal Issue grey blanket.

**Left:** Rear view of an 1864 Infantryman. The Model 1855 cartridge box is now worn on the waistbelt. His sky-blue kersey trousers are tucked into heavy civilian-style wool stockings. The black Jefferson brogans can be clearly seen.

Civil War re-enacting has become one of the fastest growing hobbies in the United States. A measure of this popularity was the recent 135th anniversary re-enactment at Antietam when over 15,000 re-enactors showed up to commemorate that September 1862 battle. One commentator observed that this was the largest gathering of men wearing the Blue and Grey in any one place since the end of the Civil War. Willis Company, a component of the larger Association, currently numbers around fifty uniformed members. Other members of the Association include men, women and children in mid-19th century dress who portray the Soldier's Aid Society on Long Island and interpret the lives of civilians during the war years. The Association is in high demand at many events, a measure of the authenticity and proficiency at drill displayed by the membership.

The Association possesses copies of the muster rolls, service and pension records for each of the original soldiers of Company H. Each current soldier is assigned and portrays an original member of the company. For example, the author portrays Lorenzo Carman, a young man of 21 who before the war was a farmer in Hempstead. He enlisted on 19 August 1862 and served with the regiment throughout the rest of the war. After 1865 he was a loyal member of the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic, the chief veteran's organisation after the war, and is, in fact, buried in the local cemetery in the town of Hempstead.<sup>5</sup> Members are able to research their 'first person impressions' for presentation to the public. This brings an added immediacy and authenticity to any encounter with a current member and allows the public to gain more insight into what the average Union soldier thought and what motivated him.

## On Campaign

We have chosen to present our illustrated soldiers dressed in their uniforms of early war, circa 1862, and as they appeared late in the conflict. The uniform and equipment of the Union soldier were influenced by civilian and military fashions, both domestic and foreign, in the 1850s. The US Army regulations provided for a dress uniform of a dark blue frock coat closed by nine buttons, and a black felt Hardee hat adorned with brass insignia and ostrich feather plumes. For campaign purposes these two items were usually laid aside and the average soldier went to war in the prescribed fatigue uniform.

For headgear the soldier wore a Model 1858 forage cap, copied from the French Army. This was actually the Model 1851 Dress Cap with the stiffener removed that caused the high sides to slope forward over the visor which was flat and squared off.

The army issued a pair of flannel drawers for underwear, and a white flannel shirt. This last item was too hot and uncomfortable in the summertime, especially in the South, and many soldiers therefore wore cotton civilian-style shirts in a variety of patterns and colours, and usually provided by family members or the army sutlers.

Each soldier received a pair of ankle boots, officially the Jefferson bootee, but more often dubbed 'gunboats' or 'mudscows'. Manufactured with the flesh side out, they also had a semi-circular metal plate screwed to each heel to reduce wear and tear.

Between 1858 and 1861 the army wore dark blue trousers. With the advent of the war, the Army Clothing Establishment calculated that they could save approximately \$700,000 per year in the cost of dyes by adopting a sky-blue kersey material for both trousers and greatcoats.<sup>6</sup>

In 1858 the army adopted a four-button fatigue jacket of dark blue flannel, issued both lined and unlined. This blouse was copied from prevailing civilian styles and was usually referred to as a 'sack coat'. Besides the buttons and insignia of rank, the jacket was worn without any other embellishments. It proved to be a very utilitarian garment, and was very popular with the soldiery.



Infantry soldiers received the Model 1855 cartridge box, of black leather, which was designed to carry 40 rounds of ammunition in two metal trays. The box was carried on a shoulder sling on the right buttock. Insignia consisted of an oval brass plate, bearing the letters US on the cartridge box flap. A circular brass plate centred on the shoulder sling displayed an eagle grasping bunches of arrows and laurel leaves.

Around the waist the soldier wore a Model 1856 belt, also of black leather, which supported the cap pouch and the bayonet frog/scabbard. A brass clip anchored the left end on the right side. The belt was closed with an oval buckle of stamped brass, filled with lead. By the late war many soldiers had laid aside the shoulder sling and often carried their cartridge box on the waist belt by the use of vertical loops on the box.

For light marching order the soldier

Views of the foot soldier's sky-blue kersey greatcoat. The mounted soldier's greatcoat was double-breasted, and the cape reached to the cuffs. The collar was also of stand-and-fall pattern. The greatcoat displayed here was adopted by the army by 1851.

carried a haversack of cotton canvas, painted black, which normally held rations in an inner bag, and a few other personal items. Each soldier was also issued a tin plate, cup and eating utensils. An oblate spheroid tin canteen was worn suspended on the left side over the haversack. This item was carried on either a cotton or leather sling and was covered in a variety of different materials of varied colours, usually of gray, blue or brown.<sup>7</sup>

On campaign the Model 1853 knapsack was worn on the back. This was of double-bag construction holding spare clothing, blanket, gumrubber poncho, sky-blue greatcoat and shelter half. The knapsack was



Left: Lay-out of equipment and clothing on a Federal-issue blanket, marked US. At middle right is a tin plate bearing hardtack crackers. On campaign, three crackers were issued for each meal. The musket nipple-wrench and tampion are at upper right. A locally produced skillet lies at middle centre. This was made of a canteen-half, with a discarded ramrod fashioned into a handle and bound with rope. A white flannel issue pullover shirt may be seen at centre left.



Left: Two views of a dog tent, showing how the shelter-halves were buttoned together, stretched over a ridge pole and pegged to the ground. By 1864 the army began issuing end pieces to reduce the wind and provide more warmth.

made of cotton canvas, painted black, and was suspended by black leather shoulder straps. The knapsack was originally designed to be issued with the Model 1855 rifle belt, and vertical straps were supposed to clip on to brass holders on the front of the waist belt. However, only the 9th and 10th U.S. Infantry Regiments were ultimately issued the 1855 model belts. All others, lacking the rifle belt, were therefore obliged to cross the vertical straps across the chest. The 1861 army regulations stipulated that all knapsacks, haversacks and canteens were to be prominently marked with the company letter and the soldier's roster number.<sup>3</sup>

The men of the 119th New York were issued the P1853 Enfield in 1862. This was a .57 calibre muzzle-loading rifle-musket, designed to fire the cylindro-conoidal Minie bullet. Ignition was by means of the percussion system. A 17.5 inch socket bayonet completed their armament. Over 900,000 of these Enfield were imported from

Britain between 1861-1865; at least 500,000 went to the Union armies, making them the second most popular shoulder weapons used during the war.

A number of changes were made to the uniform and equipment by the late war. Many soldiers, especially in the west, discarded their forage caps and adopted a slouch hat of varying colours and shapes. The trouser legs were often bloused into their heavy woollen stockings. Also disliked by many was the cumbersome knapsack, and soldiers often rolled their few possessions and spare clothing into blanket rolls worn over the left shoulder. Without any regimental or company transport, soldiers festooned themselves with kettles, frying pans and coffee boilers to prepare their rations.

Beginning in 1863 the army began issuing a shelter half to each soldier, two of which could be buttoned together to form a tent for two men. They were copied from the French Army's tente d'Arbri and replaced the heavy

and cumbersome Sibley and 'A' frame tents. They were very portable and could be erected easily with the aid of some string and a few sticks. Conditions inside the tents were cramped however, and soldiers often referred to them as 'dog tents' since even a canine couldn't live in one very easily.

#### Notes

1. Frederick P. Todd, American Military Equipage 1851-1872 (Westbrook CT: The Company of Military Historians, 1974-1978), III: 609.
2. Edmund J. Raus, Jr., A Generation on the March (Gettysburg PA: Thomas Publications, 1996), 80.
3. Frank J. Welcher, The Union Army 1861-1865 (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), II: 325.
4. Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion (Des Moines IA: The Dyer Publishing Co., 1908), III: 1451-1452.
5. National Archives, Service and Pension Records of Lorenzo C. Carman, Company H 119th New York Volunteers (Washington D.C.: 1862-1928).
6. Todd, American Military Equipage, I: 43.
7. Earl J. Coates, "The Civil War Canteens: Patterns of 1858 and 1862," Military Collector & Historian, Vol. XLVII No. 3 (Fall 1995): 98-106.
8. U.S. Army, Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States (Washington D.C.: 1861), para: 110-112.

# Fast Knights

DONALD FEATHERSTONE is the father of modern wargaming. Through his numerous books, he has inspired several generations of wargamers. A veteran of World War Two, he is a passionate visitor of battlefields around the world, telling ROBERT NOTT that an understanding of the landscape of battle is the only way to reconstruct a truly authentic wargame.

The founding father of modern wargames must undoubtedly be Donald Featherstone. Almost all other wargamers have not just heard of him but have usually been inspired by him into taking up the hobby or turning an occasional interest into a lifetime passion. As an author he has produced innumerable works both on military history and wargaming, his best known being 'War Games' published in 1962, that was undoubtedly responsible for the growth of the modern hobby of wargaming. 'I'm deeply, almost emotionally involved in military history, and I find particular fascination in the common soldier, the man in the ranks who throughout history has so often pulled from the fire the chestnuts of inadequate commanders'. His interest in the common soldier reflects his own experiences when he served in the Royal Tank Regiment from 1939 to 1946, seeing service in North Africa and Italy. 'This makes me one of the few living wargamers who have heard shots fired in anger!'

This frontline experience has not detracted from his enthusiasm for recreating historical battles in miniature, far from it, for he believes wargames do provide a valuable insight into their real historical counterparts. 'It is doubtful whether wargames will ever give one profound military insight, but the wargamer may gain an understanding of the problems of the commanders in the field and a glimpse of the military thinking of the time'. Apart from his military interest, Donald is a state registered physiotherapist and has published nine books on aspects of this career. After being physio to both Southampton Football club and Hampshire County Cricket Club, Donald now owns his own clinic but it is his vast collection of wargaming figures and ever growing portfolio of published work that has come to dominate his life. So important is Donald's

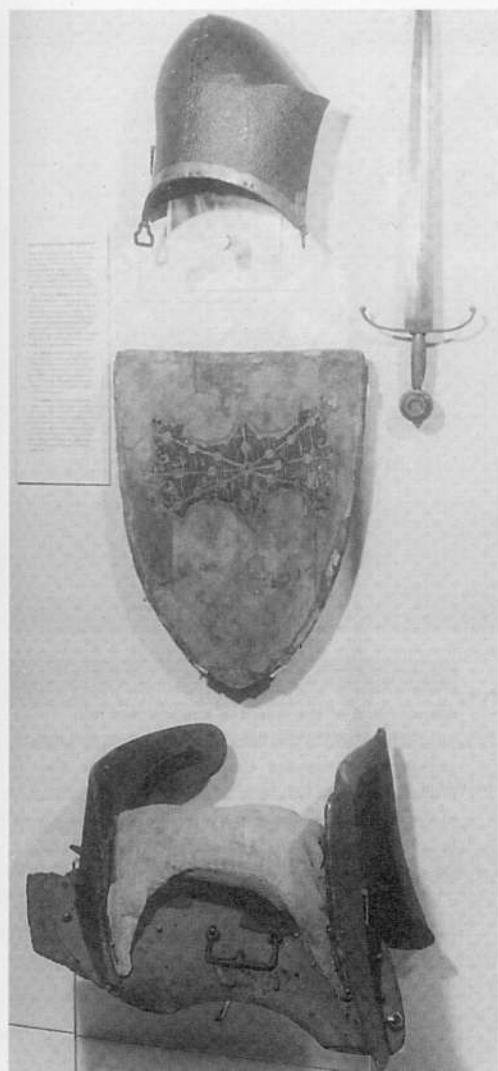


contribution to wargaming, and by association military history, that he is regularly invited to lecture in the United States to military historians and service personnel, such as an address to the US Army Staff and Command School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas on 'Comradeship and Courage in the British Army' last year, and at West Point Military Academy in July 1994.

When he is not writing or giving lectures, Donald's main passion is the exploration of battlefields in countries as diverse as South Africa and the United States. This he sees as a vital component of an active interest in military history. 'Few can fail to be significantly stirred by walking over a battlefield, hallowed by courage plus the whole gaunt of human emotions. They can be explored in awe, fascination and respect, but they deserve more than to be ignored'. This drive to experience the ground over which so many historic encounters have been fought have taken Donald to walk more than two hundred and fifty sites, not including the fields in North Africa and Italy which he saw in uniform, when he admits he lacked 'both the time and the inclination to explore or take photographs!'

**Above:** Agincourt has become famous as the victory of the English longbow. In reality the arrows caused far less damage than was commonly thought. Protected by a forest of stakes and their lowly class, the English archers joined in the melee in the later stages and were responsible for a great many of the French casualties. It was these archers that carried out Henry's infamous order to slaughter the prisoners lest they rearm themselves and endanger the English rear.

The gaps between reality and wargame representation are what Donald calls 'military possibilities', and are not merely whims or fancies that a wargamer can pander to in order to divert the events but are rather credible alterations or allowances that are designed to permit reasonable if alternative results to occur on the wargames table. It is therefore a necessity to have a sound understanding of the battle to be refought if any alterations are to be applied, and this is why Donald sees the personal exploration of battlefield sites as a firm requirement for sound wargame re-enactment. Without doubt the lie of the land



**Left: Henry V's funeral armour. The full face helmet gives some idea of the weight that a man-at-arms of the medieval period had to carry into battle and the restricted view that he had in combat. With full armour, sword and shield it was no wonder that the French knights who became dismounted were easy prey in the melee to the English archers armed with knives, mallets and a variety of medieval weaponry. When the armoured bodies began to pile up in front of the English lines, suffocation became a common cause of death as it did for Henry V's brother, the Duke of York. Contrary to popular belief the helm shown was not worn at Agincourt, despite sporting a believable dent. This myth probably came from Victorian times to increase the collection's dramatic effect. (Dean and Chapter of Westminster)**

#### **'God for Harry, England and Saint George'**

The battle of Agincourt, like Hastings holds a special place in the annals of our military past. Thanks more to Shakespeare's great play and the films that bear his name, Henry V has become, like Richard the Lionheart, an heroic figure of our military heritage. Valiant, good, and if one was to believe Olivier and Branagh good looking and charming. Even if one discounts these assumptions, the military facts of Agincourt are astounding. 'In reality it is the incredible saga of six thousand sick and weary Englishmen under an inspiring leader inflicting ten thousand casualties on a French army four times their number for the loss of less than a hundred men'. The encounter was described by Winston Churchill as 'the most heroic of all the land battles England ever fought', a grand tribute from one so steeped in the dogma of triumph through adversity. The King was only twenty-seven years old and in his third year of rule and was determined to take back the lands that had been both won and lost during the Hundred Years War.

The lands that Harry desired were far greater than the Calais and Bordeaux regions which he held and included Poitou and Aquitaine, a sizeable portion of France's territory. The army that Henry assembled for the campaign was about 10,000 in strength, of which 8,000 were archers and the rest men-at-arms. After departure from Southampton, the fleet set sail for Harfleur which was destined to be the English base of operations. Such is Agincourt's importance that the army's departure is itself recorded. 'Even today', says Donald, 'a plaque alongside a gateway in Southampton's old walls commemorates Henry's army who marched down to the ships on Sunday 11th August 1415, to set sail escorted by large numbers of swans'. The siege of Harfleur lasted nearly a month, but with Shakespeare's famous cry of 'Once more unto the breach dear friends' and the failure of a French

is by far the most underrated parameter when wargames are fought. Whilst accurate troop numbers and quality can be thoroughly researched or at least reliably estimated, the exact effect of the terrain on the commanders' viewpoint cannot. This leaves a gaping hole in the amount of realism that one can achieve on the wargames table particularly when the encounter may hang on a commander making a decision without exact knowledge due to the terrain. Only by investigating a battlefield site in person can one truly appreciate the steepness of Senlac ridge or the confusion in the Balaclava valleys that were so crucial to the outcomes of battles. One major drawback of battlesites is the ever growing tendency for them to be 'redeveloped' or in other words transformed into something that scarcely resembles the original site, often accompanied by a monument or other construction designed to mollify historians which in reality even further blurs the picture of what actually happened. For this reason more than any other the Battle of Agincourt is a vital link to the past as it has survived surprisingly intact.

'Were he to return today the King would readily recognise this place where he immortalised himself in three hours of fierce fighting'.

relieving force to appear, the town surrendered and Henry obtained his base. It was not bought without losses however, 'disease more than battle caused Henry's army to melt away — more than two thousand died, among them his best friend Richard Courtney, and five thousand were invalided home, many to die afterwards.' Henry's problem was that he had little time in which to mount a campaign as the autumn rains would severely hinder movement, but he could not stop without some even minor action if his land claim was to be taken seriously. His decision was a bold one. 'The King led a small army of nine hundred men-at-arms and five thousand archers on a march through hostile France to Calais'. The decision could easily have ended in disaster for the French blocked the river crossings and kept pace with the English. Only after a forced march and covering over two hundred and sixty miles in seventeen days did Henry's army come within a couple of marches of safety. The French, however, had crossed the English path and deployed for battle near the small village of Agincourt.

#### **Agincourt**

On the morning of October 25th, Henry's army moved out towards the French host. 'They formed up at first light, about one thousand yards from the French, who had roistered the night away in their camp about four hundred and seventy yards from the cross-roads'. Strangely enough the battle still showed no signs of starting after over four hours, Henry hoping that the French would attack, whilst the French were quite content to wait in the knowledge that Henry would have to move at some point either in attack or retreat. Henry decided to force the issue and ordered his army to advance another seven hundred yards so that only an extreme bowshot of three hundred yards separated the armies. When the first flight of arrows was loosed towards the French, the battle began in earnest.

At this point, with over twenty-four thousand armed men only three hundred yards apart, does Donald really stress the importance of viewing the ground in person. 'The whole army — five thousand archers and nine hundred knights and men-at-arms had a total frontage of about one thousand yards which you discover, with some awe, takes up the exact area between the woods, the same today as it did in 1415'. The French battle line was some two-hundred and fifty yards wider than the English position which was in the large part responsible for the outcome of the battle. 'This caused the vital funnelling effect that channelled the French into a huge uncontrolled mob unable to offer much resistance to the small, but compact force facing them. Truly, where else and on what other battlefield can one expect or discover such exact pinpointing as on this medieval arena?'

The initial French attack came from the mounted wings of the army which charged, suffered losses from the archers and failed to break the English line. The rest retreated back straight through the second attack which comprised dismounted men-at-arms. This line initially had more success but could still not break through the English line and when they were joined by the second line the situation deteriorated further. Freedom of action lay totally with the English and the superior numbers of French men-at-arms gave no advantage in the confined space. After nearly three hours of fighting and clearly making no further headway, the French that could do so retreated back to their battle line leaving their dead and dying behind them.

'Ankle deep in clinging mud, stumbling over the bodies of felled men and horses, remorselessly pushed forward by those behind, they became too tightly packed for weapons to be raised and stood there to be felled by hissing arrows and hacked down by English men-at-arms, until by early afternoon the only French left were the dead and the dying'.

Henry himself was fighting with the men-at-arms in the centre between the second and third line of his men. 'He distinguished himself and disdained the customary identically-dressed surrogates and wore alone the bright surcoat bearing the leopards of England and the Fleur-de-Lys of France'. The defeat of the main French force seems more incredible considering that the English line was composed in the main of lightly armed archers, although two factors affected the fighting ability of these troops. Firstly the archers were by their very nature peasants and thus ignoble and not worthy of hand to hand combat. The rewards of defeating a peasant in combat were negligible compared to the possible ransom that could accompany a defeated and captured nobleman. So despite taking grievous losses from their fire, the French men-at-arms were reluctant to engage the archers in the central melee until probably too late to affect the issue and concentrated their attack upon the three areas of English men-at-arms. The second advantage was the archers' possession of a sharpened stake (designed to defend the camp but equally useful for a defensive position on the battlefield) which each drove into the ground before him. These did not create a single line 'fence' but rather a thicket about thirty feet deep in which the archers could move freely whilst forming a barrier to charging horses and severely disrupting an organised dismounted attack. The main fighting of Agincourt was now over but there remains an additional facet to the battle that does little to enhance England's and Henry's reputation.

#### 'Then every soldier kill his prisoners!'

Once the attack by the dismounted men-at-arms had been beaten off, the only organised opposition to Henry that remained was the mounted third line of French nobility. In addition were a growing number of French prisoners that were being shepherded to the rear. These prisoners despite being disarmed outnumbered their captors considerably and could easily re-equip themselves from the enormous pool of discarded weaponry that lay strewn around the piled corpses by the English lines. The catalyst for the horrific event that was to follow was the massing of part of the third French line for a charge, together with an attack on the English baggage train by unknown enemies. In the event the charge was never made and the baggage train suffered only from a raid by the local peasantry, but to Henry the chance that his victory could be taken from him was too much and he gave the order to kill all of the French prisoners lest they re-arm and threaten his army's rear. Even Shakespeare's Fluellen called the order 'against the law of arms... an arrant a piece of knavery, mark you now, as can be offer't'.

The men-at-arms refused to carry the order through and only after ordering two hundred archers under an esquire was the task undertaken. Even then over two thousand prisoners were taken back to England so the extent of the massacre was probably not as great as at first thought. The mere mechanics of a small number of men killing a significantly larger number within a short time span probably limited the damage to a large extent. Although Henry rescinded the order as soon as the French third line retreated off the field, the ruthlessness of Henry's order clearly indicates a darker and more ruthless side to his heroic character.

The truly remarkable fact of Agincourt is the disparity between the French and English casualties, considering it was fought at close quarters in such a violent and horrific manner. 'The English casualties were



**Above:** Most of the mounted knights that fell succumbed not to the archers' arrows but to being cut off and surrounded. Unable to manoeuvre, the Frenchmen were wounded or unhorsed by repeated blows from men-at-arms and later archers who joined in with stakes, knives and mallets driving fatal blows through the weak points of the horsemen's armour.

negligible, not much more than a hundred and most of them were wounded. The most distinguished of the dead was the Duke of York, the King's corpulent cousin who suffocated when pinned to the ground beneath a pile of armoured corpses'. On the French side, the corpses were piled as high as six feet and numbered as many as ten thousand. The post battle sight was appalling and became worse as time progressed. 'The Count of Charleroi, eldest son of the Duke of Normandy, had five thousand eight hundred dead buried in three twelve feet wide trenches after seeing the French bodies still lying on the field of battle, stripped naked by marauding peasants one full week after the battle!'

What emerges from Agincourt is a dramatic picture of horrifically violent slaughter and butchery. Unfortunately the realism of medieval warfare cannot be properly understood without a common frame of reference and this is where Donald's passion for walking the sites of famous battles gives an important insight. Just by visiting the site with a critical eye one can glean the atmosphere and a personal feeling about the battle that is impossible to obtain from literary sources regardless of how graphic and detailed they are. For the wargamer the message is clear: 'When attempting to reconstruct any real-life battle, the terrain is perhaps the most important factor in the project because both in topographical features and dimensions it must closely resemble the actual battlefield, otherwise what takes place upon it will bear only the most coincidental resemblance to the historical events under simulation'.

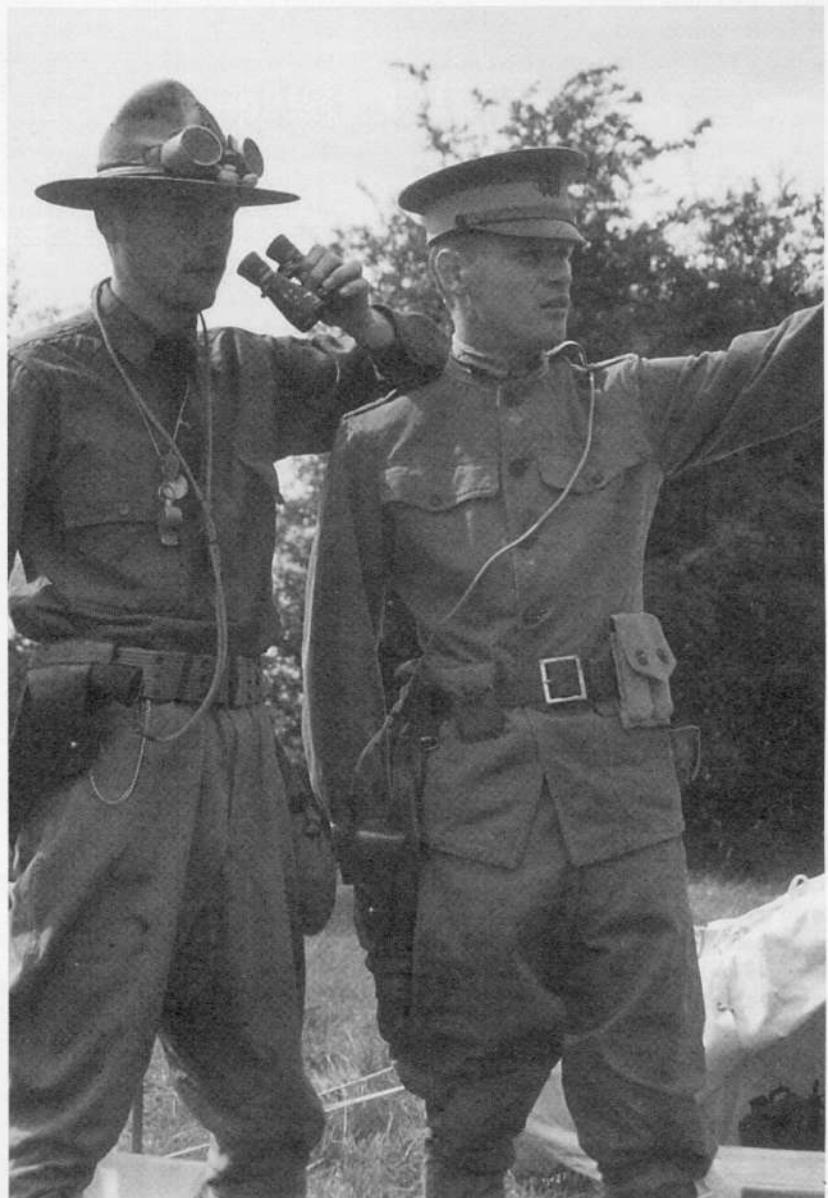
# Hunting Pancho Villa

In 1916, the notorious Mexican bandit raided US territory and an expedition under General Pershing was ordered to hunt him down. An unusual incident to recreate, it is even more extraordinary when it turns out to be a British re-enactment group. PHILIPP J C ELLIOT-WRIGHT tracks them down.

In 1911 the pro-American Mexican dictator Diaz was overthrown. He was succeeded by a series of short-lived and chaotic regimes. The ongoing political chaos resulted in a profusion of bandit groups who occasionally slipped over the Rio Grand into the United States. The American government responded to these frontier incidents and an 'insult to the flag' when the crew of the USS *Dolphin* was arrested in Tampico on 9 April 1914 by occupying Veracruz from 21 April to 23 November. However, the border incursions continued and culminated on 9 March 1916 when Pancho Villa lead over 2500 'Villistas' into New Mexico. Some 700 of these bandits stormed into the small town of Columbus, charging down the main street shooting anything that moved and throwing grenades into any open doorway. As the Villistas retired back to Mexico the tiny twenty-nine man garrison of Columbus under Colonel Frank Tomkins bravely gave pursuit, ultimately chasing Villa back over the Rio Grand (this act of reckless bravery made Tomkins a national hero). However, President Woodrow Wilson had had enough and within days, on 15 March, General Pershing was ordered across the border with ten thousand men to capture Villa and end the bandit threat. This 'Punitive Expedition' lasted for nine months, only withdrawing on 30 January 1917. While Villa remained free and the military actions that resulted were not an unmitigated success for American arms, it

did ultimately deter further serious incursions.

Now whilst this historic footnote might not seem the most likely event to recreate for British re-enactors, *Pershing's Doughboys* do just that, and with almost entirely original clothes and equipment. Formed barely three years ago by Duncan Aran and his brother, the group now has around two dozen members. Duncan and his brother have been collectors of militaria for twenty years, having long ago concentrated on American pieces. Long fascinated with American history, Duncan originally began re-enacting with a Wild West group, then joined the American Civil War Society and the 14th Brooklyn (more accurately the 14th New York State Militia). Intrigued by the period of military history that witnessed the final transition from Napoleonic tactics to modern, the Punitive Expedition became the focus of study. Here, Mexicans armed with a mixture of Mauser bolt action rifles, lever action



Above: Recreated 1st Lieutenant and sergeant of American cavalry as they would have appeared during Pershing's 1916 Punitive Expedition (Duncan Aran)

Winchesters, Marlin Carbines and Colt single action pistols (mostly obtained from nefarious American sources) fought a modern mobile guerrilla war. They confronted American troopers still armed with sabres, yet also sporting model 1911 Colt automatic pistols and Springfield 1903 model bolt action rifles. Alongside the traditional cavalry troopers, the American Army for the first time utilised motorised transport for supplies and the fledgling Air service in the form of eight Curtis-Wright bi-planes. General Pershing himself was driven around in a Dodge command car by the young Lieutenant George C Patton, his adjutant.

Having studied the Punitive Expedition for over a decade and amassed a remarkable collection of original pieces, by the mid-1990s it seemed the logical thing to do more than just display these at home. With others from the 14th Brooklyn and ACWS, the group was formed with the object of utilising almost entirely original clothes and equipment. To successfully achieve this has been no small feat, both in terms of contacts and money. Utilising both traditional catalogues, but increasingly the enormous range of contacts available on the Internet, the mail order dealers in the States have done much business. Given that Pershing's Punitive Expedition was immediately followed by American involvement in World War One, the group also undertakes an American Great War impression. For this and the Pershing impression, the numerous World War One discussion groups on the Internet have often been able to assist with questions over the identity of existing pieces of equipment and locating those still required.

Duncan and his brother can be seen in the picture that accompanies this article, and apart from the boots, every item they wear is original to either Pershing's actual Punitive Expedition or World War One. Duncan on the right is dressed as a cavalry First Lieutenant. The 1912 model officer's garrison cap made in Kalamazoo, Michigan cost over £150. Better made than trooper's caps and with the tan band that indicates it is an officer's, Duncan was lucky to find one that fitted, given that it has a stiff basket inside. The 1912 model cotton-canvas service coat is the unlined summer version. The dark bronze finish brass buttons are attached by rings to make them easy to remove and launder the coat. As it is for field wear there is no metal rank distinctions although the braid on the cuffs indicate the wearer's commissioned status. Including insignia, this coat cost £100 thus indicating that there were far more surplus coats at the end of 1918 than caps. The 1912 model cotton-canvas breeches cost £40 whilst the 1917 cotton-canvas gaiters cost £25. The gaiters worn in the photograph are in fact infantry ones, those for the cavalry being lined on the inside with leather (Duncan possesses two pairs of the latter, but both are too big for him to wear). The boots are modern reproductions as original Pershing boots cost at least £400 and cannot be worn (almost all footwear in the group is reproduction). The belt is a garrison belt, only worn by enlisted personnel in garrison but by officers on campaign. A 1912 Garrison belt can cost £200 hence the one worn by Duncan is a reproduction. In the European theatre of war, Pershing ordered his officers to wear British Sam Brown belts to distinguish them from enlisted personnel, as the Americans had no counter-part, just Garrison belts. The holster is a very scarce 1912 swivel hanger

(the later World War Two holsters hung directly from the belt), the holster costing over £220 and the hanger £15. The canvas pouch on the right for two spare clips was made by Anson Mills, that worn being the 1917 version costing £20. The much scarcer 1915 version with eagle stamped poppers can cost in excess of £200. The leather pouch on the left is for a five-round stripper clip for the Springfield rifle. Finally, there is an original 1911 model colt automatic pistol in the holster made in 1917, although thanks to the recent Firearms (Amendment) Act, it has had to be de-activated.

On the left is Duncan's brother uniformed as a sergeant. His 1911 campaign hat with yellow hat cords (yellow for cavalry, blue for infantry and red for artillery) cost over £250. The original Wilson goggles were £100 and would have originally been a private army purchase as there was no official equivalent. The wool-cotton mix mid-brown service shirt with elbow reinforcement is of a pullover design with just a three-button slit down to mid-chest level. This cost between £60-70. A hanger on the right side for a sabre distinguishes the campaign pistol belt; it cost £35. The holster is original, costing between £260 and £350. The revolver in the holster is a Colt 45 new Service model made in 1910 (the last patent date for this model was 1884). However, an American Army starved of resources over the previous decades carried many such obsolete weapons. Again, it is de-activated. The sergeant holds 1917 US Army Field glasses, costing anything between £70 and £300. The breeches, gaiters and boots are as for the officer. Both the lieutenant and sergeant wear original lanyards.

Given the group is mostly uniformed in original pieces and lacking any Mexican bandits to fight, the Doughboys concentrate on living history and commemorative events. This use of original items also means that the group does not represent any specific unit. It is

felt, rightly I think most would agree, that to remove original badges and insignia to conform to a chosen unit would be a sacrilege. Recreating a variety of soldiers, the group was honoured last year by being asked to participate by the First Infantry Division (the Big Red One) at the unveiling of the monument to American soldiers at Caumont L'Evente in Normandy. This raised a few eyebrows when the American servicemen present realised that the 'American' World War One soldiers were in fact British, commemorating their dead at a French monument. They have also commemorated Pershing's men at the only monument to them in Britain at the United States World War One cemetery at Brookwood in Surrey.

The Doughboys have established strong links with the Columbus Historical Society and the curator of the small museum there in New Mexico to the Punitive Expedition, Marion Elliot. Amazed that British re-enactors would recreate the little known soldiers of 1916, she has offered every assistance. Duncan and his fellow soldiers are eager for new recruits and anyone interested in joining or just meeting the group can contact Mr Howard Aran on 01327 830812.





Above: Although the women's uniform changed little there are four different buttons that can be found on the service jacket. Shown here left to right:- (1) The standard pattern plastic button which was worn by the majority of Wacs until the introduction of the metal button. (2) When the WAAC became a part of the army and dropped its auxiliary designation a plastic version of the regular army button was adopted. Because of the vast quantity available, the old type remained in use and substitution of the new pattern was not authorised for those already in possession of the old style. (3) All plastic buttons were replaced in the summer of 1944 by the regulation gold metal version was worn by enlisted men. (4) An unusual British made version of the regulation button, but with a plain background and no border, can also be found on WAC uniforms.

Left: An Air Wac fighter control plotter at work in the operations room of a fighter station. This corporal wears the gold coloured metal buttons on the tunic, indicating that this picture was taken during or after the summer of 1944, and despite the Air WACs almost universal use of the winged prop she has retained the Pallas Athene collar badge.

# WACs' Kit and Insignia

MARTIN BRAYLEY continues his ground-breaking study of women's uniforms of World War Two by looking at WAAC kit and insignia.

## Ancillaries

It was realised quite early in the programme of WAAC uniform development that a handbag of some type was essential for women, in or out of uniform. An example in twill fabric, in the same colour as the uniform buttons, had been submitted for consideration as early as May 1942. This design had proven impractical as the fabric did not wear well. It was therefore decided to substitute an imitation leather in the same shade as the service shoe. This 'leather' material was made from sateen fabric with a textured coating of nitro-cellulose based 'Pyroxylon' which gave a gained hide appearance to the surface. Once again this design proved to be insufficiently

hard-wearing and tended to flake, particularly at corners. At this indecisive stage of development the initiative was taken by Director WAAC, Col. Oveta Culp Hobby. In the Autumn of 1942 she sent her assistant Mrs A.A. Lentz to the OQMG with a bag manufactured in calfskin by 'Richard Koret Inc'. Although using expensive and scarce materials the bags were obtained by the Procurement Division, for issue to the WAAC.

The OQMG remained unhappy with the material used for the 'Bag (WAAC) Utility' as it had now been designated. A revised specification based on a bag submitted by Lesco Ltd. was approved for all future procurement. Similar to its predecessor the

new bag was made of the more durable seal leather, although this was later partially substituted by goat skin and Water Buffalo as acceptable alternatives.

The bag was originally worn on the left side with the strap across the body and supported on the right shoulder. WAAC regulations of June 1943 changed this method to one where it was worn on the left side suspended from the left shoulder. This tended to lead to the strap slipping from the shoulder and in order to prevent this a small anti slip pad was designed to attach to the strap. On November 8th 1943, before the pad had gone into production, new regulations were issued adopting the previous cross over

method of wear, thus dispensing with the need for the non slip pad and undoubtedly improving the posture of the Wac.

The main body of the bag was made of four sections of leather. It was 28.5cm wide by 22cm deep and was suspended by a shoulder strap 2.1cm wide and adjustable from 66cm to 120cm. This strap was used to suspend the bag from the shoulder, as a waistbelt suspension, or, as it was secured by snap fasteners, it could be removed entirely leaving a clutch type bag.

Internally the bag was lined with OD cotton poplin. It had two main compartments, four smaller pockets, and a separate removable change purse measuring 9.5cm x 17.5cm.

### Service Shoes

The service shoe adopted for use by the WAAC was a russet colour oxford. Initial procurement had proved unsatisfactory, being too light and tending to stretch. An improved version was accepted into service in September 1942, heavier in construction than their predecessor they were laced by a double row of six eyelets.

The service shoe was used for general duties, by those employed on light work, for parade and walking out. They were often discarded in favour of commercially obtained 'dress pumps' (Court shoes) which were slip on, closed toe shoes with somewhat higher heels. The use of this type of commercial 'pump' was officially sanctioned in June 1944, although, officially, only for wear with the newly introduced off duty dress. This shoe was not procured by the OQMG but was made available to WAC's via the Post Exchange Store and local retailers.

### Insignia

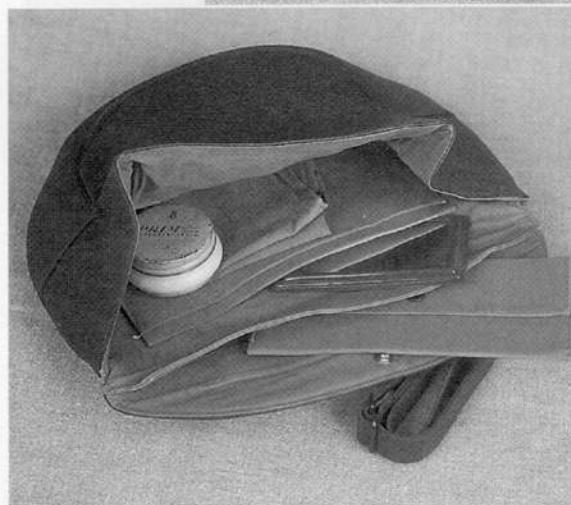
The regulations applying to the wearing of prescribed military uniform also applied to military badges. This meant that the US Eagle coat of arms cap device worn by officers and enlisted personnel of the army could not be worn by the WAAC, nor could army buttons or arm of service collar insignia.

### Cap devices

As the US coat of arms were not an available option a new insignia had to be designed for the WAAC. The army heraldic section produced a distinctive eagle design which was accepted by WAAC HQ and was subsequently adopted for both cap and buttons. This slightly lopsided design showed an American eagle looking to its right with wings spread. Auxiliaries wore this gold coloured eagle superimposed on a backing disc of matching colour.

The redesignation of the WAAC in July 1943 led to a review of the cap badge. It was decided that as the stocks of WAAC eagle badges became exhausted they be replaced by the regulation army cap device. This led to a changeover period where there was some overlapping of the style of cap badges being used.

Right: The strap was easily removed as it was retained only by a press stud fastening, as shown here. It was generally considered appropriate for the strap to be worn attached.



Left: Interior view of the lining and pocket arrangement of the utility bag. Also shown are the issue purse, a mirror, handkerchief, and a jar of PRIM deodorant cream. (This was sold to members of the women's forces at a substantially discounted price, as noted by a label on the base of the jar).

Below: The regulation enlisted version of the Pallas Athene insignia. The use of this emblem gradually diminished as they were replaced by the arm of service insignia of the unit with which the Wac was serving.

### Buttons

Because of the need to conserve metal it had been decided in March 1942 that WAAC buttons would be made from olive drab plastic. At this time the design had not yet been finalised but the WAAC eagle was eventually adopted with an identical button being adopted for use on both officers and auxiliaries uniform. It was felt that the plain plastic buttons added a touch of conservatism and character to the uniform.

The dropping of the term auxiliary and the corps new status also led to a change in the design of the button. As with the cap badge it was felt that the WAAC eagle should be progressively replaced by buttons bearing the coat of arms of the United States. These new WAC buttons were also made from olive drab plastic and were issued as old WAAC stock became exhausted.

By April 1944 brass was no longer in critical supply. The dull khaki colour of the uniform had always been somewhat unflattering and needed a degree of brightening up. It was therefore decided that the dull khaki plastic buttons were to



be replaced by regulation gold coloured ones, immediately adding a little extra style to the uniform. Shortly after, in the summer of 1944, the Quartermaster General issued sufficient buttons to allow all individuals to substitute brass buttons for plastic. Garments held in store were not altered but upon issue to an individual new buttons were supplied and the plastic ones returned to store. These buttons were all produced in the regulation 25 ligne (5/8"), 36 ligne (9/10"), and 45 ligne (1 1/8").



Above: The Army Air Force always saw themselves as a military arm in their own right and resented being part of the Army. This sentiment was reflected in the title 'Air Wac', which was used for WACs attached for duty with the USAAF, and the use of the USAAF collar insignia instead of the Pallas Athene. Air Wacs were proud to wear the blue and gold patch of the USAAF. This Air Wac Staff Sergeant is carrying the Utility bag in the manner (re) adopted in November 1943. Her previous service in the WAAC is signified by the wearing of the ribbon of the WAC medal, in service colours, above the left pocket. The Air Force winged propeller device worn on the collar shows her current employment with the USAAF.



Above: The moss green and old gold WAAC tab worn by all NCOs below their rank badge. It is shown here with the three chevrons of a WAAC Leader. The use of these tabs was discontinued when regular army ranks were introduced.

Below: This Air Wac Flight Clerk wears an air force shoulder patch, the ribbons of the American campaign medal and the European-African-Middle Eastern campaign medal, air crew members wings, and a double set of US and Air Corps collar discs. With the exception of Flight Nurses very few women received their wings. Officially flight clerks were first awarded wings in June 1945. Their role is best compared to that of a civilian air hostess, providing a similar service on military passenger flights, particularly those involving senior officers and VIPs.



Below: Two badges were worn with the Hobo hat, at left the WAAC eagle emblem, officially worn until July 1943, and at right the regulation army badge, which replace it. This badge bore the US eagle coat of arms.



## Collar Insignia

It was generally felt that in addition to the cap badge and buttons a collar insignia particular to the WAAC was also desirable. An emblem that was symbolic of the role of the corps was necessary and a figure from mythology was suggested by Colonel Grice<sup>1</sup>. The Greek goddess 'Pallas Athene'<sup>2</sup> was chosen and approved by WAAC HQ on the 10th May 1942.

The WAAC collar insignia was worn by both officers and, superimposed on a disc, by auxiliaries. By 1945 the universal use of the 'Pallas Athene' had declined, this was due in part to conformity with army regulations, and partly due to the Army Air Forces' insistence that all personnel attached for duty should wear its winged propeller arm of service device.

1. Colonel L.O. Grice had been appointed to take charge of the WAAC clothing project on the 5th of February

1942. At that time he was Chief of the Supply Division's Standardisation Branch, the WAAC programme being only one of his many responsibilities.

2. 'Pallas Athene' was most appropriate as she was goddess of handicrafts and as wise in peace as she was in war. She had a dual character, Pallas being goddess of storms and battle and Athene goddess of peace and wisdom with regard to human life.

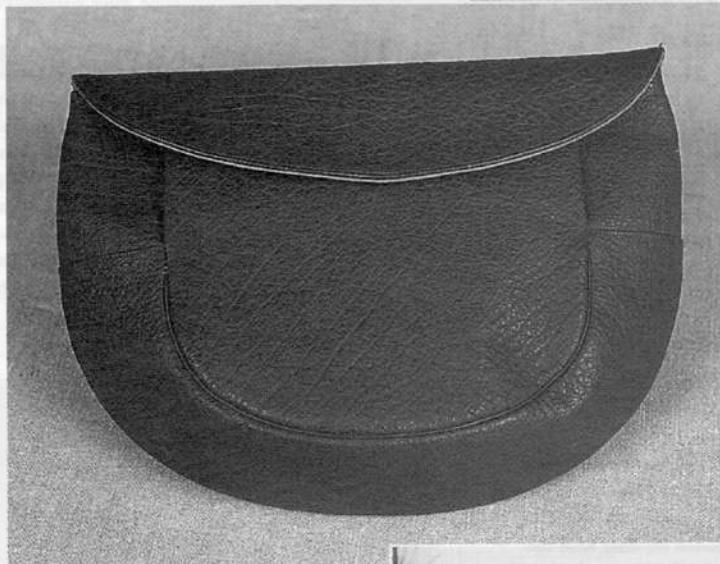
## Rank insignia

There was some debate about the style of chevrons to be used by the WAAC. It was considered that a smaller version of the regular army badges should be used, but eventually the standard army type were adopted. As previously described the adoption of an army badge by an auxiliary service meant that some form of device was required to distinguish them from regular NCOs. Waacs were therefore required to wear a cloth tab beneath any chevrons being worn, thus identifying them as non military personnel.

The WAAC NCO's tab was a small 6x2cm strip with the letters WAAC embroidered in moss green on an old gold background. They were to be worn directly below any chevrons worn by NCOs. The tab, as it was called, was approved by WAAC HQ on the 4th August 1942, with the Corps colours of old gold and moss green having been previously approved on March 25th 1942. The tab was not worn after July 1943, when female NCOs became the equal of their male counterparts.

Right: 'Shoe, Service, Women's, Low'. A plain Oxford style shoe in the regulation russet brown leather, it was the main form of issue footwear during WWII. For rough use the 'Shoes, Field, Women's' would have been used.

Below: Front view of the WAAC utility bag, it has had the strap removed for use as a clutch bag. Despite the quantity of materials and manpower required to produce such an item it was felt that it was essential for servicewomen to have such a handbag.



Below: UK, Winter 1945. A detachment of coloured members of the WAC are inspected by two of their officers. These women are wearing the winter service uniform, lisle stockings, wool anklets and field shoes. By this stage of the war the 'Cap, Garrison, Wool, WAC' had completely replaced the earlier visored cap. (Note the absence of any shoulder patches) (IWM).



## Integration

By the end of the war in Europe the eagle and insignia unique to the WAAC had ceased to be worn. The only exceptions were the gold and green cap piping and the 'Pallas Athene' collar device which was in limited use, having been almost entirely superseded by

army branch of service insignia. Wacs were entitled to wear all of the army AOS insignia with the exception of those worn by the combat units, namely the Infantry, Cavalry, Field Artillery, Coast Artillery, Armoured and Tank Destroyer units.

## Acknowledgments

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# Kukri — Myths and Facts

The curved knives of the Gurkhas have cast fear into their enemies over many centuries. **WARNFORD WILSON**, formerly an officer in the 6th Gurkha Rifles in World War Two, unravels the reality from the legend.



Gurkha Engineer with kukri in camouflaged sheath, also carrying non-standard MP-5 SMG (John Norris)

I first heard the word 'kukri' at about the age of nine or ten from my father who used to tell me stories of his days in the army. This is one. A little Gurkha, sent out with a patrol to clear a wood in World War One, came up against an enormous German. Quick as a

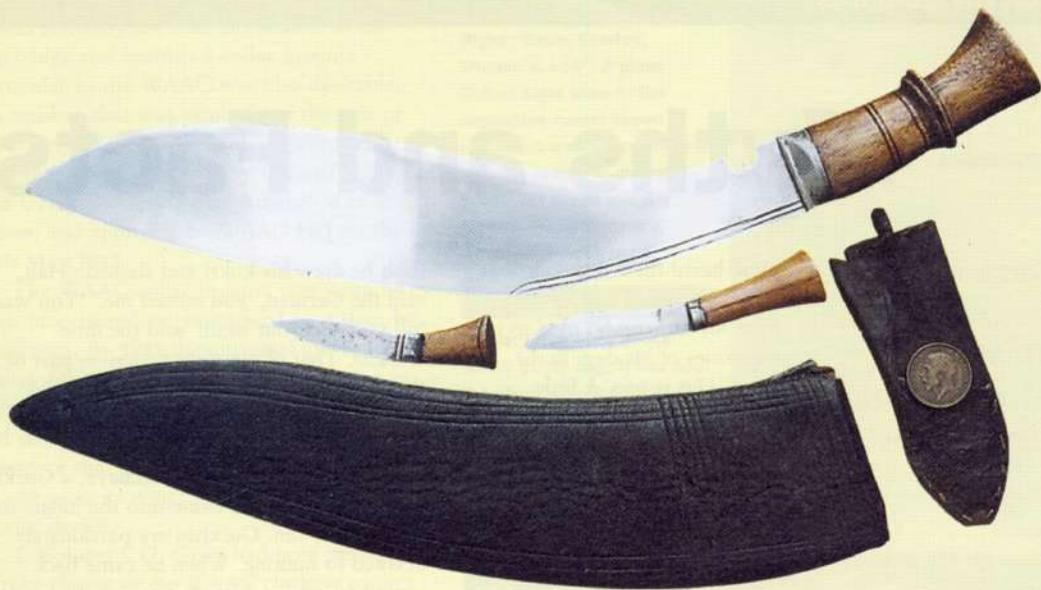
flash he drew his kukri and slashed. 'Hah,' said the German, 'you missed me.' 'You wait 'till you nod your head!' said the little Gurkha. That of course is fiction — part of the mythology of Johnny Gurkha and his terrible fighting blade. But what about the fact?

In World War Two, in Malaya, a Gurkha Havildar slipped off alone into the jungle to have a little fun. Gurkhas are passionately devoted to hunting. When he came back some hours later, he was carrying the head of a Japanese soldier. On being questioned, he said that he had come upon a patrol going in single file along a narrow trail. What he had done was take the head of the last man in line without the others being aware. And he had brought the head back to show just how stupid the Japs could be. That story is from an official source. As are these.

In Burma, a young Gurkha rifleman had cleared four Japanese trenches single handed. There remained only one machine-gun nest that was creating havoc among his comrades. Out of ammunition, all he had left was a smoke grenade and, of course, his kukri. So, like the born hunter he was, he crept up, popped in the grenade and as the Japs staggered out coughing and blinded, he snicked off their heads one by one. During the advance up through Italy, another rifleman, Thaman Gurung, again looking for a little fun, used to go off alone and spend the nights stalking the enemy and quietly taking their heads. The effect on German morale, as may be imagined, was devastating. Later in another action, that same young Gurkha won one of the Gurkhas' many VCs. Again in Burma, in hand-to-hand fighting, Jemedar Kumbarsing found himself up against a Japanese officer — samurai sword against the kukri. The kukri won!

Now to the weapon itself, but first a little more mythology. As everyone knows, the kukri, once drawn, is never returned to its scabbard until it has tasted blood! Nonsense! The kukri, like the bowie, dah or machette is a heavy, general purpose field knife used for clearing undergrowth, chopping firewood and opening cans of beans as well as for hunting, self-defence and as a weapon of war. But there is a germ of truth in this legend. In many Nepalese households there is a shrine to Lord Shiva, the God most revered by warriors, and to his consort Kali. On this shrine there is generally a kukri used only for blood sacrifice of animals to the Goddess (about which I will write later) and for other rituals.

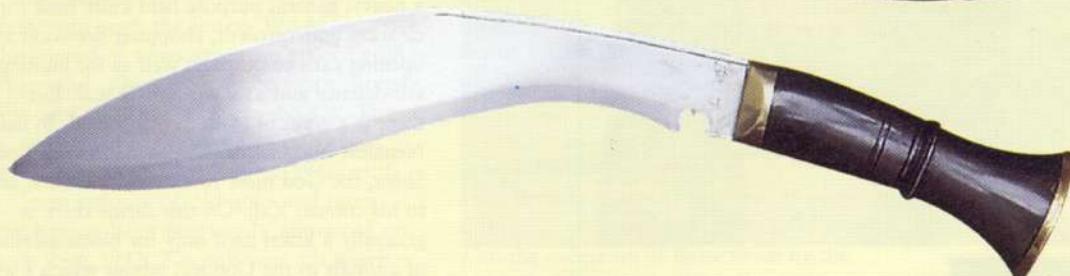
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Left: Old cherrywood-hafted Nepalese kukri with skinning knife, honing steel and purse carried in pouches at back of the scabbard. A King George V halfpenny piece dated 1912 was found in the purse.



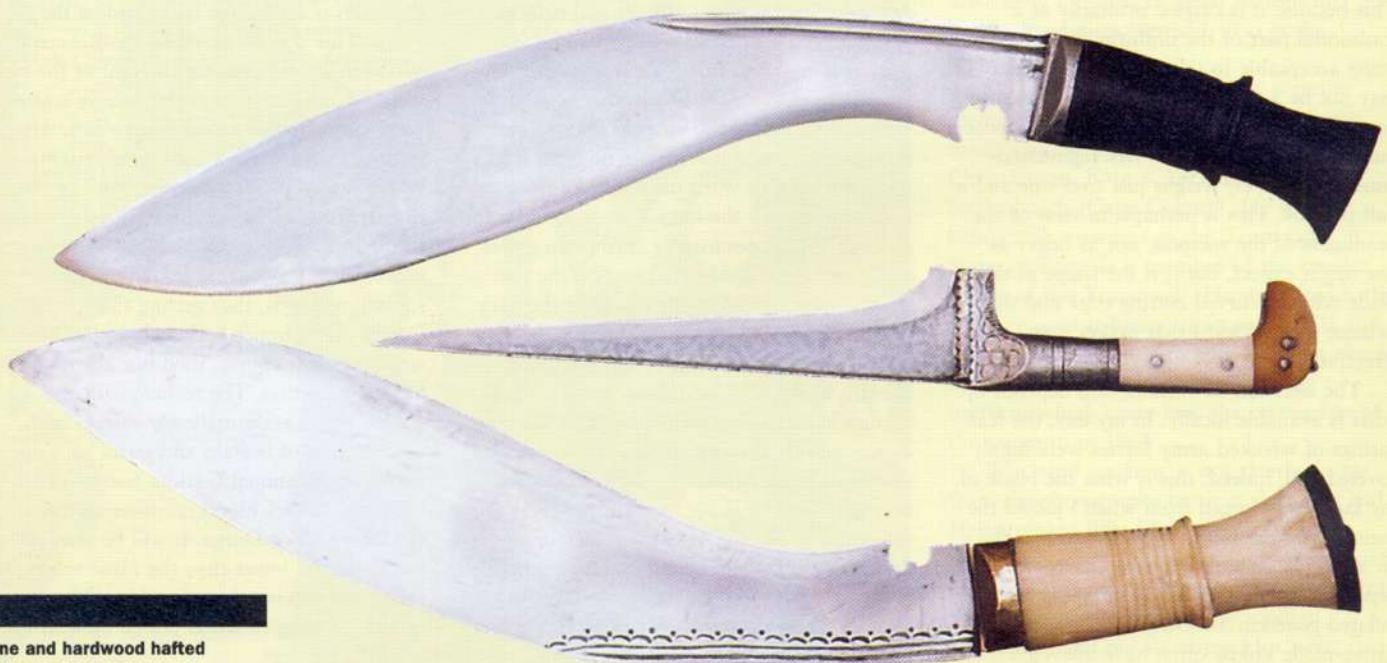
Right: Nepalese-made ritual or presentation kukri with brass-mounted bone grip, horn pommel and brass embellished scabbard.



Left: This regimental-issue brass-mounted, black buffalo hafted kukri shows the smaller bladed, larger hafted weapon introduced post World War Two. See text for further comment.



Left: Three typical Nepalese-made kukris. (1) Brass-mounted, bone hafted kukri with decorated scabbard, (2) cherrywood hafted kukri and (3) small hardwood hafted kukri in hand-tooled leather scabbard.



Bone and hardwood hafted  
Nepalese-made kukris with a  
Presh Kabz traditional knife of  
the frontier Palhan.

Every kukri has a notch at the base of the blade. In an American book on fighting knives, I read that it is a sight used when the kukri is thrown. Again rubbish! It is a fool that throws away his personal weapon, particularly when the target is moving and heavily protected by clothing and webbing! And how about this — seen in a book written by a senior British officer: "...the notch at the base of the blade is used to catch and break enemy bayonets and edged weapons." Since the notch is half-moon shaped and barely half an inch in depth, its effectiveness in that role can be imagined! No, the notch is in fact of religious symbolism — a representation of the male organ (lingam) of Lord Shiva rising from the female organ (yoni) of his consort, Kali.

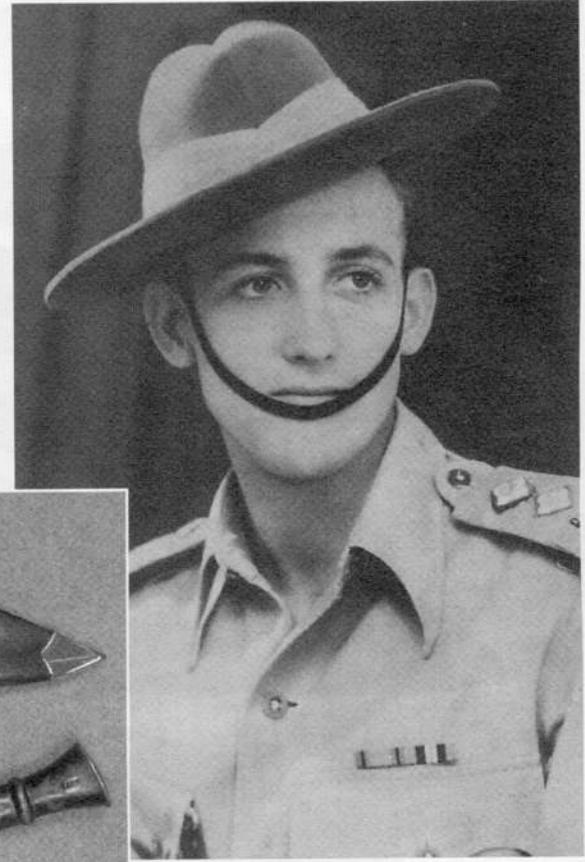
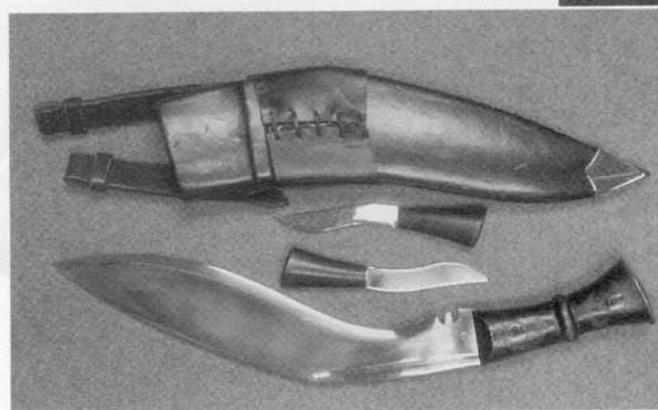
Physically, until post World War Two, the kukri changed hardly at all from those encountered by the British in the last century. Typically, it is 16 to 17 inches overall, with a blade of 12 to 13 inches and at its widest part about 2½ inches.

The haft, usually of hard wood but of black buffalo horn, bone or even ivory in the better examples is small. This is because the hand of the stocky little Gurkha is only approximately the size of that of an eleven year-old Western boy. Today, the regimental-issue kukri is much reduced in size — with a smaller blade but larger haft. This because it is carried primarily as a traditional part of the uniform; it no longer being acceptable to take heads! There may or may not be a pommel — usually of brass or horn. Weight? Hunting and general purpose kukris, about one pound. My regimental-issue kukri (1945) weighs just over one and a half pounds. This is perhaps, in view of the deadliness of the weapon, not as heavy as one might expect, but it is the shape of the blade with its curved cutting edge and the balance well forward that makes it so effective.

The steel can be variable and depends on what is available locally. In my day, the leaf-springs of wrecked army lorries were highly coveted and, indeed, this is what the blade of my kukri was forged from when I joined the regiment on the North West Frontier — by an armourer squatting over a charcoal fire kept at white heat by a boy pumping an inflated goatskin 'bellows'. The blades of native-made kukris often have uneven surfaces and imperfections, but the blade of the bone-handled Nepalese 'ritual' kukri here has a fine musical ring to it and will hold an edge as well as any in my collection. Other kukris you may find are 'contractor' kukris made in India to army specifications in World

Right: Lt James Warnford Wilson, 6th Gurkha Rifles (Queen Elizabeth's Own), North West Frontier Province, 1945.

Below: A rare example of just 1400 Kukris hand-forged by the Wilkinson Sword Company during World War Two. (Wilkinson Museum)



War Two. Quality is good, but the finest are those forged in Britain by the Wilkinson Sword Company who made just 1400 in World War Two. These blades carry the Wilkinson mark. Rarely available since they are often treasured by ex-officers of Gurkhas or their families, are 'presentation' kukris made for high ranking officers and princes and dignitaries in Nepal. These can be very ornate with grips of bone or ivory, silver or gold mounted and the fine leather scabbards embellished with silver or gold filigree and semi-precious stones. There is no need for me, I am sure, to warn the reader of this magazine against the kukris made in India for tourists, the blades usually chromium plates and peeling! I should here mention the two small knives carried in the pouch at the back of every kukri scabbard. One is very sharp — a skinning knife (useful also for trimming toenails in the field) and the other is a thick honing blade. The pouch sometimes also carries an oily rag, a purse and tweezers. Gurkhas, being Mongolian by race, do not normally need to shave, and the tweezers are for plucking out the occasional facial hair. Surprisingly, kukris are not much in demand today and can often be picked up for around £30 to £40. With a provenance — as, for example, once owned by a named and decorated Gurkha — you can pay £150 and for fine presentation weapons, £200 and more.

How is the kukri used? As briefly mentioned, much of its effectiveness comes from the curved cutting edge of the blade. It

can be shown mathematically (*The Book of the Sword* by Richard F Burton) that even with a blow at right-angles — as one would use an axe — the advantages of a curved over a straight edge is 'an enormous gain in cutting power'. But added to this is the terrible drawing or slicing action with which the kukri is used... the hand leading the blade. This was observed by the Reverend Wood in 1896: "...the very weight of the blade would drive it half through a man's arm if it were only allowed to fall from a little height. But the Gurkhas have a mode of striking which resembles the 'drawing cut' of the broadsword and which urges the sharp edge through flesh and bone alike.' The most powerful stroke is from left to right and slightly upwards, thus getting the whole weight of the upper body behind it. Other strokes are, of course, used but always with the slicing action. The technique of the slicing action is dramatically shown in the decapitation of buffalo and goats with one stroke at the annual Gurkha festival of Dashera with its blood sacrifices to the Goddess Kali or Durga. It will be seen that the hands are lower than the blade which, to prevent it striking the ground and blunting, is caught by a log of wood placed between the animal's forelegs.

All of which may seem a bit bloody. But one must never forget those other attributes for which the Gurkha is famous — his cheerful grin and unfailing good humour in the worst of conditions, and his generosity to an enemy once defeated. ■

# Transvaal Uniforms

Traditionally, Boer soldiers are characterised as being farmers wearing their civilian clothes into battle, but there are several incidences of uniforms being worn by Boer forces. ANTHONY DAVID JONES uncovers some examples of Boer uniforms in the Transvaal.

For sometime now I have been of the opinion that Boer forces during the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 wore uniforms to a greater extent than has previously been considered the case, though perhaps 'military style clothing' would be more accurate. The artillery of both the Orange Free State and the South African Republic (Transvaal) are known to have worn both parade and service

dress, photographic evidence showing clearly that even the parade dress tunic was pressed into service in the front line. But as far as I know the photographs illustrating this article are new to a UK audience.

The first photographs refer to a matching set of tunic and breeches held by the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein, Free State, RSA. They are

hand stitched in light tan coloured, heavy duty canvas. The breeches have photographed darker than they actually are while the tunic has been reproduced very well. The tunic has a stand collar which is closed by two 'hooks and eyes'. The front of the tunic is closed by plain, bone buttons as are the four patch pockets, though these are hidden in the photographs due to all pockets being unfastened. There is no evidence (holes, light patches of canvas or stitches) to show that any insignia was ever worn. The tunic is unlined.

The breeches are fitted with buttons on the waistband, front fly, and around the top (presumably for attachment of braces). There are lacing holes at the base of the legs for a snug fit beneath riding boots or gaiters. The metal buttons are stamped 'Best Edge...' and are clearly identical to metal buttons on canvas bandoliers (British?) also in the museum archives.

Documentation held by the museum identifies the tunic and breeches as being made and owned by Peter Bille-Christiansen, born 6 April 1880 in Stellenbosch (Cape Colony). He was a heliograph operator in the Transvaal Statesartillery (ie a member of the regular forces of the Transvaal). He stayed with the artillery until it broke up in early 1902 and then he went on commando. Nothing else is known, including when he made the uniform which came into the ownership of the museum in 1964.

The hand stitching is not clearly visible from the photographs but it is clear that had Heliographer Bille-Christiansen been photographed in 1902 wearing this tunic and breeches, they would have been mistaken for a captured British uniform by modern researchers and not recognised for what they are.



Left: Commandant W S Lubbe and his nephew C A Vieweg, his wife and daughter.

The second uniform is a mystery. It is identified on documents held by the War Museum of the Boer Republics as belonging to Commandant W S Lubbe of the Jacobsdal commando. There is a matching pair of trousers held by the museum (not illustrated). The group photograph (reproduced by kind permission of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein) shows Comdt Lubbe with his nephew C A Vieweg (who also served as his military secretary) and the Comdt's wife and daughter. He is clearly wearing the uniform with a sash of office.

The tunic is made of a beige cord with dark blue tape around the edge of the tunic. The chest has three rows of blue and orange braid. This blue and orange braid also appears around the cuffs and along the outer seams of the trousers (which are flared). The chevrons are of a dark green colour. The simple shoulder cords are stitched to the top of the sleeves and attached by a brass button near the neck. The tunic closes by the use of hoods and eyes.

This uniform poses more questions than answers. Comdt Lubbe was wounded twice in the 1899-1902 war, losing an eye, so the photograph clearly predates the war. Why is a Comdt wearing a uniform with sergeant's stripes? Does anyone have an idea regarding the origin of the uniform? I suspect that it could be a British raised volunteer unit, possibly dating from the earlier period of British rule in the Transvaal, 1877 to 1881. But I have no proof. It remains, however, an interesting example of a Boer uniform.

#### Acknowledgements

I acknowledge, with thanks, the assistance of the staff of The War Museum of the Boer Republics in providing me with the photograph of Comdt Lubbe as well as allowing me access to their collection of uniforms not usually on public display.



Above and below: Front and back of Bille-Christiansen jacket



Lubbe jacket



Left: Closer detail of lower leg, clearly showing the lacing holes of the bottom leg



Above: General view of the breeches



Left: Close up of the fly and waist belt

# Retreat or Crucial Victory?



Eighty years ago this month, the Germans launched a massive attack on the Western Front which sent British forces reeling backwards. But was the March Retreat one of Britain's worst defeats, or was it in fact a great defensive victory that broke the German army and paved the way for victory later that year?

**G D SHEFFIELD of the ROYAL MILITARY ACADEMY SANDHURST reassesses this crucial combat.**

'It was still dark on the morning of March 21st [1918] when a terrific German bombardment began — "the most terrific roar of guns we have ever heard"... The great push had started and along the whole of our front gas and high-explosive shells from every variety of gun and trench mortars were being hurled over. Everyone [in 54th Brigade] realised that the great ordeal for which they had been training and planning for weeks was upon them'.

The March Retreat of 1918 is remembered as one of the worst defeats in the history of the British army. After four years of deadlock, in their Spring Offensive the Germans used innovative new artillery and infantry tactics to break through the trenches of the British Fifth Army and reopen mobile warfare. Fifth Army lost large numbers of men and guns captured, and were forced into headlong retreat. The popular view of this battle is epitomised by the catch-penny title of William Moore's 1970 book on the battle, *See How They Ran*. This view follows on from the hysteria of 1918. Fuelled by inaccurate newspaper reports, the rumours of disasters on the battlefield were given credibility by the prime minister, David Lloyd George. In a speech to parliament on 9

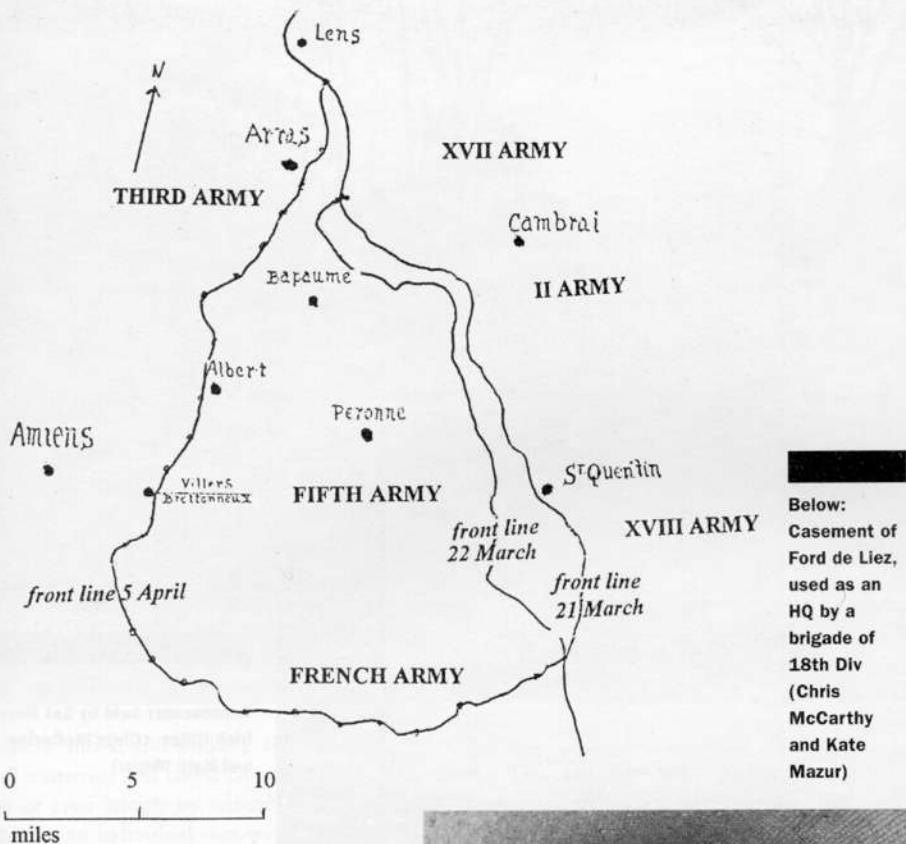
April 1918, Lloyd George cast some aspersions on the performance of Fifth Army, and its commander, General Sir Hubert Gough, who was sacked on the eighth day of the battle. In Gough's own, bitter words, 'All were... clear that the real cause of the retreat was the inefficiency of myself as a general, and the poor and cowardly spirit of the officers and men'. But how true is this traditional picture? Was the Fifth Army defeated as badly as some have claimed? Or was the German Spring Offensive in reality a British defensive victory?

At the end of 1917, the Germans were presented with a rare window of opportunity to win the First World War. Russia, beaten on the field of battle, had collapsed into revolution, thus releasing large numbers of German troops for use on the Western Front: in the spring of 1918 the Germans could deploy 192 divisions, while the French and British could only muster 156. The German policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, introduced at the beginning of the year, had backfired disastrously. Not only had it failed to knock Britain out of the war by cutting her vital Atlantic lifeline, it had prompted the United States to enter the war against Germany. As yet, the vast American war

Above: Site of 'Dublin' used as HQ by a battalion of 18th Div (Chris McCarthy and Kate Mazur)

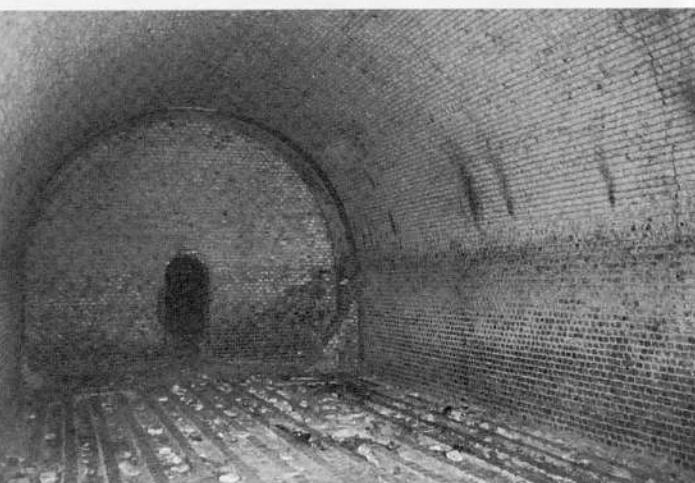
machine was still gearing up for action. Substantial numbers of American troops would not reach Europe until the middle of 1918. The German commanders, Hindenburg and Ludendorff, had no desire to sit on the defensive and risk repeating the battering the German army had received at the hands of the British at Passchendaele in 1917. They decided to stake everything on one last gamble: to strike in the West and defeat the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and French army before the Americans could intervene with decisive numbers. Ironically, the fateful decision was taken at a meeting held on 11 November 1917. Exactly twelve months before the war ended, in great part as a consequence of the decision taken on that day.

On 21 January, the plans were finalised. Operation Michael was to attack the British, whom the Germans correctly identified as the most dangerous of the Allied forces, in the Somme-Arras sector. Three German armies were to be employed, opposite either side of St Quentin. Opposite Byng's British Third Army in the Arras area was von Below's Seventeenth Army, while to their south, covering the Flesquieres Salient and the northern portion of Gough's British Fifth Army, was von der Marwitz's Second Army. Both German formations belonged to Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group. Facing Gough's southern sector was von Hutier's Eighteenth Army, of the German Crown Prince's Army Group. Broadly, the plan was to crack open the British defences, and then push through into open countryside, wheel to the north and strike the BEF's flank. Then



further offensives could be launched. In the initial stages of the offensive, von Below and von der Marwitz were to capture the old 1916 Somme battlefield before turning north to envelop Arras, while von Hutier was to act as a flank guard, dealing with any French forces that emerged from the south, and offering support to von der Marwitz's forces.

The attackers had several advantages over the British. First, numbers. The British were suffering from a manpower crisis which had forced divisions to be reduced from 12 infantry battalions to only nine. Haig was forced to make hard choices about where to deploy his divisions. Miscalculating the weight and axis of the German offensive, Haig deliberately left his southermost Army, Gough's Fifth, weak. Haig correctly calculated that he could afford to give ground in the Somme area, while to have yielded territory further north would have been catastrophic. A short advance in the Ypres area, for instance, would have brought the Germans to within striking distance of the coast, which would have imperilled the entire British position and perhaps have prompted a 'Dunkirk' style evacuation, twenty-two years early. Thus Gough had only 12 divisions to defend 42 miles of front, although he faced 43 German divisions. Byng by contrast had 14 divisions on a 28 mile frontage against 19 German divisions. In the Michael area, the Germans had 2,508 heavy guns against only 976 — a 5 to 2 advantage. Haig gambled on Fifth Army holding out heavy odds. In the words



**Below:**  
Casement of  
Ford de Liez,  
used as an  
HQ by a  
brigade of  
18th Div  
(Chris  
McCarthy  
and Kate  
Mazur)

machine gun posts, and redoubts but in many cases, lack of time and labour meant that the Rear Zone was never constructed. Worse, while the Forward Zone was intended to be lightly held, to do little more than delay the attacker and force him to channel his attack where it could be more easily broken up in the Battle Zone, by artillery and machine gun fire and local counter-attacks, as much as one third of British infantry were pushed into the Forward Zone.

At 0440 on 21 March, the 'Devil's Orchestra' conducted by Hutier's innovative head gunner, Col Bruchmuller, began the overture to the offensive. Five hours later, assisted by a dense fog, the infantry assault broke on the battered and disoriented British defenders. By the evening, the situation was critical. The BEF had lost 500 guns and 38,000 casualties, and the Germans had captured the Forward Zone almost everywhere. Worse, in the extreme south, Hutier had broken through Gough's Battle Zone, forcing British III Corps to retreat to the Crozat canal. Yet even on the first day of the *Kaiserschlacht*, the Imperial battle, the British had achieved a modest, but none the less important success: they had denied the Germans their first day objectives.

German  
Seventeenth Army's  
attack on Byng's  
relatively strong and  
well dug-in Third  
Army achieved far less  
than had been  
intended. Similarly  
German Second Army  
had failed to achieve  
the breakthrough they  
had sought. All this  
was at the cost of  
40,000 German  
casualties. Recent

research has emphasised the heavy casualties sustained by the Germans in their Spring Offensive, as a result of clumsy tactics and relentless attacking. While this argument is valid, it only tells half the story. The Germans did not 'defeat themselves': stubborn resistance by Allied (especially British) soldiers inflicted those losses on the attackers. These acts of resistance ranged from 18th Division's counterattack at Baboeuf on 24-25 March, to the action of a Lewis Gun team of 24th Royal Fusiliers, led by two NCOs, who went forward to delay the enemy advance on their sector.

The 22 March saw the renewal of the offensive. British XVIII and XIX Corps fell back, in part as a result of confusion among the British commanders. Third Army was still holding its Battle Zone but was now being outflanked as Fifth Army was pushed back. To the South, von Hutier's Eighteenth Army had advanced more than 12 miles, and

of the British Official Historian: 'Never before had the British line been held with so few men and so few guns to the mile; and the reserves were wholly insufficient'.

Second, 'fighting power'. For most of the war, the morale, tactics, weapons etc of the two sides were roughly equal. In tactical terms in March 1918 they were not. In the previous two years of almost constant offensives, the BEF had become highly effective at the art of attack. While much play has been made of German 'stormtroop' infantry tactics and 'hurricane' artillery bombardments used on 21 March 1918, in truth there was little for the BEF to learn from their enemy in this respect. Fighting on the defensive, however, was a novelty, especially because the British had introduced a new concept of defence-in-depth, modelled on the German pattern. In place of linear trenches, defensive positions consisted of Forward, Battle and Rear Zones, utilising

this led Ludendorff to make an important error. He was painfully aware that the offensive was not going according to plan. He complained of the lack of progress of von Below's army on 22 March, which had a knock-on effect on Second Army. Ever the opportunist, on 23 March — the day that saw the Germans capture the Crozat canal — Ludendorff decided to make Hutier's army the point of main effort. Hutier's Eighteenth Army had originally been given the role of flank-guard, but now, accompanied by Second Army, it was to drive west and southwest to drive a wedge between the BEF and the French. Von Below's Seventeenth Army and German forces further north were to push back the British. Any Staff College would criticise this plan as breaking two of the fundamental principles of war: failure to select and maintain the aim and lack of concentration of force.

The resistance of the British defenders had led Ludendorff — whose grasp of strategy and operational art was tenuous at best — to change his plan on the hoof. Now, the Germans were to disperse their force, rather than concentrate it, with disastrous effects.

The next few days were grim ones for the BEF as the Germans continued to advance. However, there were glimmerings of light for the Allies. On 26 March the crisis led to the

appointment of the French general Foch as Allied generalissimo, to co-ordinate the activities of the Allied Forces. This averted the threat of the French concentrating on defending Paris while the British watched for their lines of communications. Moreover Operations *Mars*, the next phase of the German offensive, was decisively defeated by Byng's Third Army. On 28 March, nine German divisions attacked north of the Scarpe. The attackers used much the same methods that had proved so successful on 21 March. This time they were attacking well-constructed positions, without the benefit of fog, and the British conducted a model defensive battle. In the words of Captain Cyril Falls: 'Ludendorff stopped the attack that very night... The British achievement should be described in gold letters on Britain's role of honour. The defence of 28 March not only killed Ludendorff's plan to expand the battle but virtually ended the battle itself.'

*Michael* was not quite dead; a few spasms of offensive action remained. Ludendorff now scaled down his objective to that of taking Amiens. Even this was beyond



Above: The crossroads at Contescourt held by 1st Royal Irish Rifles. (Chris McCarthy and Kate Mazur)



Left: View from Boadicea redoubt looking east, towards German lines. Redoubt held by Lord Farnham's 2nd Inniskillings (see text) on 21 March. (Chris McCarthy and Kate Mazur)

the German troops. They were halted ten miles short of their goal, at Villers Bretonneux, by Australian and British forces on 4-5 April. On the same day Byng was again attacked, and again the Germans were thrown back. By this stage the gambler Ludendorff was prepared to throw in his hand. On 5 April, he called off the *Michael* offensive and prepared to renew the attack further north.

What had Ludendorff achieved? At the cost of 250,000 casualties, including many of his stormtroops, the sixteen days of battle had captured a large salient some 40 miles deep, which as the events of the summer were to show, was extremely vulnerable and difficult to defend. The BEF, especially Fifth Army, was badly battered, but was far from defeated. The French and British armies had not been driven apart. Had the Germans succeeded in converting their operational 'break-in' to the BEF's positions into a 'break-through' of the BEF, they could well have won the war. That they did not is due to four main factors. First, the difficulties inherent in any First World War offensive — the lack of modern communications and a

usable instrument of exploitation (although the mass of German cavalry kept in Russia would certainly have been useful in March 1918 in the West). Second, Ludendorff's mistakes. Third, the resilience and dogged fighting of the BEF. Fourth, the generalship of the BEF's commanders. Gough deserved to be sacked for the way he handled his offensives of 1916 and 1917; ironically, he was sacked for a defensive battle that he conducted with some skill. In short, the British benefited from German problems and errors but undoubtedly won a significant defensive victory, a victory that saved the Allies from defeat in March 1918 and laid the ground for the Hundred Days of victories of August-November 1918.

Leaving aside the overall impact of the campaign, what can be said about Fifth Army's performance on 21 March? The heavy losses of that day — and the circumstances in which they occurred — cannot be brushed aside. There is much evidence that morale was low in some cases — the question is, how low? The nineteenth century Prussian military philosopher, Carl von Clausewitz, differentiated between



Left: View from Jeanne d'Arc Redoubt, looking NW towards Racecourse Redoubt. (Chris McCarthy and Kate Mazur)

soldiers' mood and soldiers' spirit. Mood was transient, and could change from day to day or even minute by minute, depending on whether an individual was wet or dry, warm or cold, hungry or full. Spirit was something very different. It was quite possible for a unit to have good military spirit yet be full of grumbling, whining men. In March 1918, British soldiers had much to moan about. Only four months had passed since the gruelling attritional struggle around Passchendaele had ended. The army was short of men, meaning more work for everyone. A number of battalions had just been disbanded, leaving groups of disgruntled men to be absorbed into remaining units. The need to work on the defensive lines meant that the 'rest' periods of the infantry were too often spent on hard manual labour.

Yet on his return from the Western Front in January 1918, General Smuts produced a report for the War Cabinet that categorically affirmed that the morale of the BEF was 'sound'. This view was confirmed by a report based on the censoring of 84,000 soldiers' letters, covering the April-July 1918 period. The report frankly stated that the units of Fourth Army (as Fifth Army had been renamed) could not be described as 'happy': they were war weary, and cynical about politicians and senior officers. But what Clausewitz would have described as their spirit remained intact: Fourth Army's 'combative spirit' was still 'very high'; the ordinary soldiers were determined 'to stick it to the end'.

Not every soldier fought to the last round. Many stragglers headed for the rear at the beginning of the battle, but they seem to have been mostly non-combatants. By mid-March no less than 68,000 men were working on the defensive positions, including 12,000

Italians, 5,000 Chinese, 10,000 PoWs and 4,500 Indians. The Fifth Army's Deputy Provost Marshal reported that on 21-22 March few fighting troops became stragglers, and they 'were chiefly those who were genuinely lost and anxious to join their Units'. Surviving statistics indicate that the worst period for stragglers came in the period 27-30 March, at least six days after the initial German assault, when sheer exhaustion would have been a major factor.

The numbers of British soldiers taken prisoner, some without putting up much of a fight, is strongest evidence for a collapse of morale on 21 March 1918. The total of 38,000 British casualties sustained on that day included no less than 21,000 prisoners — one of the largest mass surrenders in British military history. Perhaps even more significant was the loss of about 500 guns to the Germans, because when an army loses its artillery, it is generally a sign it is on the verge of collapse. But as Martin Middlebrook has commented, poor British defensive tactics distort the picture. By cramming 27 battalions into the forward zone, Fifth Army effectively offered them up as sacrifices. Once the German infantry has got behind their positions, the defenders' sense of self-preservation set in, seeing no point in useless sacrifice. Some men fought on until an inspirational commander was killed, and then they surrendered. This happened to the 16th Manchester, who defended Manchester Hill until the death of Lt Col W Elstob, who was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross for his part in the action. Other officers surrendered their commands. One, Lt Col Lord Farnham of 2nd Royal Irish Rifles, satisfied his honour by obtaining a note from his German captors, which said that his unit had put up stiff resistance before surrendering. The importance of the

surrenders of 21 March must not be exaggerated. If Fifth Army's morale had been uniformly poor, the Germans would have taken all their objectives on the day — which they failed to do. If the morale of Fifth Army had collapsed, the Germans would have won the First World War. Instead of advancing swiftly, virtually unopposed, the German army was forced to fight its way forward against increasingly stiff British resistance. In the spring of 1918 the British army fought the German army to a standstill. That is ample testimony to the fundamental soundness of the military spirit of the British soldier.

The German Spring Offensive did not come to an end on 5 April. Operation *Georgette* opened on 9 April south of Ypres and initially made good progress. Thereafter what the British called the Battle of the Lys reverted to the pattern familiar from the earlier fighting further south; stubborn British resistance; the vital defensive action of 55th (West Lancashire) Division south of the initial German break-in is a case in point. *Georgette*, as dangerous as it was, was contained. Further German offensives were launched on the Somme, Aisne and, as late as 15 July, on the Marne. Ultimately, they were all failures. With the twin blows delivered by Allied forces on the Marne (18 July) and at Amiens (8 August) the initiative passed decisively from Ludendorff's hands. His great series of gambles had failed. Let us leave the last word on the March Retreat to Winston Churchill, by no means an uncritical admirer of British generalship in the First World War: 'Contrary to the generally accepted verdict, I hold that the Germans, judged by the hard test of gains and losses, were decisively defeated'.

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# Permit to Possess

The wearing of camouflage was tightly controlled by the South African authorities during the Apartheid regime, but as their police force became involved in special actions against terrorists, they were issued a variety of camouflage uniforms. JEFF FANNELL and ROBERT PITTA explain the role of the South African Police and describe their uniforms.

The use of camouflage clothing in South Africa has been a subject of controversy since its introduction almost thirty years ago. Once freely available to the general public for hunting purposes or as a children's 'toy', camouflage became a banned article, its use and possession restricted to members of the South African Police, certain members of the Defence Force and a very limited number of collectors fortunate enough to have obtained the necessary 'permit to possess' doled out sparingly by the South African Police.

From the turn of the century through the 1960s the South African Police (SAP) and Defense Force (SADF) have preferred khaki coloured field uniforms, a practice which dates back not only to South African Forces in the Western Desert in World War Two but to the Boer Wars. Boer Commandos generally wore khaki or brown coloured clothing which blended better with the terrain.

Until 1993 the SA Army still issued their distinctive brown 'Nutria' field uniform. With much of the South African terrain being dry and sparse throughout most of the year, with an abundance of red earth, the use of Nutria clothing seemed practical as a means of camouflage. Further reasoning was to avoid confusion during the heat of a contact and to minimize friendly-induced casualties amongst the often inexperienced National Servicemen when facing camouflage-clad terrorists. South Africa eventually followed the world 'trend' of camouflaging its army and adopted a six colour SOLDIER 2000 camouflage uniform for issue to all permanent force units but maintaining the Nutria uniform for their part-time citizen force units and 'commandos'.

The organisation of the South African Security Forces, like that of their Boer ancestors, is structured such that its full-time

army constitutes only 20% of the whole. Young men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five were obligated to serve one year of National Service in the SADF and thereafter are transferred to a part-time Citizen Force unit or a Commando where they serve once yearly for 4-6 weeks at a time for the next twenty-five years. This part-time army comprises 80% of the SADF, the bulk of which is only available upon mobilization. The South African Police is mainly a full-time Gendarmerie and even its unpaid reservists are required to put in a minimum of 16 hours a month. For this reason the SAP has always been considered the country's first line of defence.

In the Nirvana-like South Africa of the early 1960s the SAP seemed to have a merely representative role maintaining law and order not only in the built-up and outlying areas of South Africa but also within that of her protectorate South-West Africa (SWA), now Namibia. Small outposts and camps dotted northern SWA and constables went about the fairly mundane routine of daily police activities in the bush. The first terrorist incident in SWA occurred in 1966 and immediately thereafter terrorist incidents increased in frequency and

**South African Policeman attached to Koevoet wearing the SAP second pattern camouflage uniform. 1984. Short sleeve shirts were common as well as a variety of equipment. In this case he wears Rhodesian chest webbing and the SAP version of the Pattern 70 webbing belt. (PHOTO: ARMED FORCES MAGAZINE)**





**Above: SAP Internal Stability Police wearing 2nd Pattern camouflage taking a break outside Orlando Stadium in Soweto, Johannesburg, 2 May 1991. (PHOTO: KEN OOSTERBROEK)**

**Left: South-West African Police camouflage field dress uniform, often referred to as 'Koevoet' camouflage.**

uncovered pockets and a lack of epaulettes were characteristic of the 'Captain Caprivi' suits. It is interesting and perhaps humorous to note that this is the camouflage the SAP would later officially adopt as its first pattern.

It wasn't until 1972, long after SA policemen were 'volunteering' to serve in Rhodesia, that the SAP decided to standardize the wearing of camouflage clothing by adopting this first pattern of 'pinwheel' camouflage. The first policemen sent to Rhodesia initially wore a Nutria overall with a brass SAP shoulder bar but were soon issued with Rhodesian camouflage uniforms. Thereafter, as the SAP first pattern camouflage was produced, it was uncommon to see policemen mix both these camouflage patterns.

Once use of the 'Captain Caprivi' suits became official issue to the police, the background and colours of this SAP first pattern camouflage were darkened, plastic buttons replaced metal buttons, snaps, and zippers, epaulettes were added and the quality of manufacture was improved. The camouflage material was generally printed by one company with the manufacture of the uniforms handled through various companies and even manufactured under license in Rhodesia for the SAP units serving there. After its adoption by the SAP, manufacture and release was strictly controlled.

Within three years the SAP developed and adopted their second pattern of camouflage. The nature of their work in the outlying regions of South Africa and South-West

intensity. The SAP struck back immediately, killing 18 and capturing 59 terrorists that year. By 1968, 160 insurgents were behind bars. During these years individual policemen at bases such as Oshikati, Rundu and Katima Mulilo in SWA soon began wearing their own, privately purchased camouflage uniforms.

At that time, two commercial patterns of a crude splotch camouflage were imported to South Africa from the Far East. Cheaply manufactured, and with no apparent attempt at effectiveness, this camouflage was rarely found in anything other than small sizes. Four patterns and variations were also being produced locally within South Africa; a small splotch pattern of green, brown and mustard on a tan coloured background; a winter and summer variation of a larger splotch pattern in either a base colour of green or tan with splotches of green, dark brown & black or tan, brown and black respectively; and the 'pinwheel' pattern which was to become so popular with youngsters, that it earned the nickname of 'Captain Caprivi', a comic-book character along the same lines as GI Joe or Actionman. Shiny metal buttons and snaps, exposed metal zippers, elastic cuffs,

Africa required this second pattern to be exclusive and distinctive from any camouflage previously available in South Africa as well as not resembling any other African State or Eastern Bloc camouflage clothing patterns, which were likely to be worn by the terrorists policemen might encounter in the border area. It has been noted that the SAP second pattern is one of the most technically effective camouflage patterns due to the method of printing where the screens are moved and reset each time a new section of material is fed through and printed, therefore the pattern seldom repeats itself.

Both the first and second patterns of SAP camouflage were manufactured under license in Rhodesia during the SAP's involvement there. The distinct differences between articles manufactured there and those in South Africa were velcro closures on the cuffs of the Rhodesian version and the longer, slimmer rubber-stamped cloth label of JOHN LOVETT & SONS (Pvt) Ltd which washed out quickly and soon became illegible. Another tell-tale sign is that Rhodesian companies were Private and bear the (Pvt) markings after the company's name whereas South African manufacturers were Proprietaries and their labels bear the (Pty) markings or the Afrikaans equivalent of (Bpk).

By the early 1970s terrorist activities in SWA had become even more brazen and frequent. With the collapse of Portuguese rule and the arrival of the Cuban Expeditionary Force in Angola in 1975, the SADF assumed responsibility for security operations in SWA. This allowed the SAP to concentrate a larger number of forces in Rhodesia and in 1978 establish the first training base in SWA for the newly created South-West African Police which produced its first black graduates in 1979. Officially the SAP were concerned with the future implications of their withdrawal from SWA. However, as a protectorate of South Africa, then under the leadership of the hard-line Prime Minister (later to become State President) P. W. Botha this seems an unlikely explanation. As South Africa came increasingly under international pressure to accept UN resolution 435 (recognizing SWA's

right to self-government) the SWA Police Force represented more of a façade than an actual independent police force since the majority of SWAPOL's officers were seconded from the SAP.

The ever increasing terrorist activities in SWA, the rapidly expanding need for more manpower, and increasing international pressures forced South Africa to officially withdraw all SAP Counter-Insurgency (COIN) units from Rhodesia where they had not only played an active role in the war there but also gained invaluable experience. SAP COIN units did remain in Rhodesia and their preference for the Rhodesian camouflage clothing rather than the SAP concealed their presence well into 1979, although the South African government officially continued to deny that any SAP units remained in that country.

In 1978 the SADF approached SAP Brigadier (later to become General) Johannes 'Sterk Hans' Dreyer with the idea of establishing a police special counter-insurgency unit in SWA, thereby expanding the SAP's role against terrorism there. Drawing on experience gained during the SAP's service in Rhodesia, General Dreyer wanted to form a unit loosely based along the lines of the Rhodesian Selous-Scouts. The unit would recruit local men who knew the customs, language and terrain of the area they would be operating in.

Thus was born Op's K. Better known as *Koevoet* (an Afrikaans word meaning crowbar) the unit initially consisted of 64 Special Constables and 10 White South African Policemen who had previous counter-insurgency experience. As early as 1979 elements of the first section, identified as call sign Zulu-Fox, had their first success when contact was made and the group of terrorists they had been tracking for seven days was destroyed.

Initially *Koevoet* members were mainly South African Policemen who generally chose to wear the SAP second pattern camouflage since it was almost all that was officially available to them at that time. Later, with the establishment of South-West African Police, most of *Koevoet*'s members were officially seconded from SWAPOL and would often be seen wearing the distinctive SWAPOL camouflage. Eventually, the attire of call signs became so tumultuous and lackadaisical that General Dreyer issued strict orders for a green bush uniform to be adopted as standard wear for all of *Koevoet*.

On 10 November 1978 it was published in the government Gazette by the Minister of Police that: '...Any textile or other



Above: South African Railway Police Regional Task Force screen printed 'wing' worn above name tape over right pocket.

Left: South African Railway Police Regional Task Force screen-printed shoulder patch.

material on which two or more of the colours khaki, green or brown or a shade of any colour which resembles such colours, in any combination, shade, composition pattern or shape appear and which—designed, patterned and coloured so as to blend with a natural environment...'.

With this seemingly innocuous statement, the wearing and/or possession of camouflage became illegal for the average citizen. In the early 1980s, shortly after Zimbabwe independence, many ex-Rhodesian soldiers immigrated to South Africa, taking their camouflage uniforms with them. But in SA, where camouflage was now illegal, it was not uncommon for some Rhodesians to be temporarily detained by South African Policemen and their precious Rhodesian camouflage jacket confiscated. (Whether the article was actually destroyed or simply found its way

into a policeman's private collection is not known).

Originally established in 1867 the South African Railways and Harbour Police (SARP) was reorganized in 1934.

Operating independently of the SAP the SARP was charged with the task of

guarding many of South Africa's key point installations including airports, railway stations, trains and harbours. As a result of the hijacking of a Boeing 727 in 1981 the SARP formed their own Task Force to deal with such incidents. The SARP Task Force underwent training similar to that of the SAP Task Force and the unit included specialists in sniping, diving, demolitions and parachuting. Later, a Regional Task Force was also formed and this unit spent much of their time dealing with unrest situations inside the black African townships in South Africa.

In 1986 the entire SARP, along with both of their Task Forces, were disbanded. A small number of the SARP were absorbed into the SAP but those policemen who were lucky enough to transfer into the SAP faced a very tough exam and generally a drop in rank. Along with the SARP, their unusual green and brown camouflage uniform



Left: South African Railway Police clothing manufacturer's label.

Left: SAP Internal Stability Unit Lance Sergeant in second pattern camouflage. Note the use of a single rank brassard and Unit 2 'tupperware' pocket flash. (PHOTO: C. STRINGER)

ill-feeling from the community, the SAP (with the prospect of a 'New' South Africa looming) changed its reasoning and began to establish more

positive police-community relations by separating their riot police from the 'boys in blue'. They reorganized their Reaction and Riot units into the new and semi-autonomous Internal Stability Units (ISU) within the Internal Stability Division (ISD). With an initial strength of 5,600 men, the new members as well as the members of the old Reaction/Riot Units who transferred over, were trained in new techniques which put much emphasis on diffusing violent situations and obtaining the '—co-operation, support and approval of the broad community—' The formation of the ISD as a separate unit was also an attempt to bring a greater form of nationwide standardization to the SAP.

'To ensure the visible autonomy, members attached to the ISD shall be issued with their own uniform and logo in the interim, all duties will be performed in the camouflage uniform...' The SAP second pattern camouflage uniform, phased in again and reissued to the ISD, was short-lived.

In the last days of the old South Africa the ISU bore the brunt of controlling violent situations and the camouflage clad Policemen were a common sight not only in the townships and unrest areas of South Africa but on the streets of Johannesburg, working side-by-side with constables wearing the blue field uniform. With the

became obsolete until the late 1980s when it was again adopted by the army in the independent 'homeland' of Ciskei. Though there was a very slight colour variation in the Ciskei version, the most distinctive change was in the trouser cargo pockets, eliminating the small 9mm and 7.62 magazine pockets.

By 1989 the SA Security Forces had withdrawn from SWA/Namibia but unrest within the Republic was growing to astronomical proportions. In 1990 organisations such as the ANC had been unbanned, restrictions on the Press had been lifted and the image of the SAP was rapidly tarnishing. In an effort to discourage the 'Storm Trooper' image of the Police, both within South Africa and abroad, the SAP began to phase into use a blue 'field dress' uniform for urban duty while reserving camouflage for their Special Task Force only (an anti-terrorist unit formed along the lines of the GSG-9). Much of the second pattern camouflage uniforms handed in by policemen were destroyed at that time.

By 1992, with world pressure at its peak and the escalating involvement of the SAP in combatting unrest situations resulted in over 5000 'physical attacks' on policemen within the Republic. Because a large section of the Police were forced to function in a climate of "conflict and violence" which was leading to

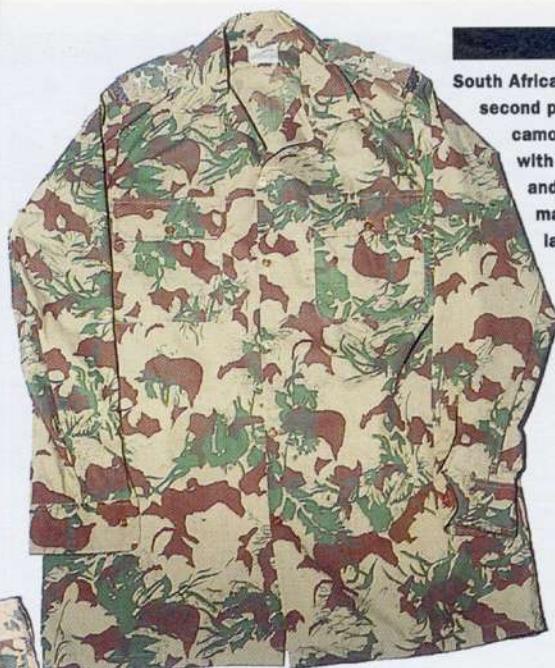
democratic elections of 1994 and the rise of a black ruled 'New' South Africa, the title of Internal Stability Unit was considered too inflammatory and the units were briefly redesignated as High Risk Teams before the politically correct title of 'Public Order Police' was adopted in 1996.

Currently, the SAP Special Task Force is the only unit where the second pattern camouflage is still officially worn though many policemen still wear theirs during training sessions at the dusty Maleoskop or Jakkelsdans training grounds well out of the public eye. The Task Force tested and adopted a SAP second pattern camouflage *slangvel* (snake-skin) paratroopers jump jacket similar to those worn by the Army Paratroopers. The Army version used the heavy, tent-like, rip-stop Pattern 80 material as reinforcing on the shoulders, elbows, pocket bottoms and crutch flap which gave the appearance of snake skin, hence its nickname. The first prototype *slangvels* varied slightly from the original SADF nutria model in that the shoulder and elbow patches were only double-layered camouflage material. The approved Task Force *slangvel* which went into production reinstated the Pattern 80 rip-stop material as well as adopting square pockets. Plastic, ten-inch, open-end zippers were added on either side of the bottom hem to allow the jacket to be worn over a webbing belt but allowing access to a sidearm worn on the belt.

With the exception of the Special Task Force, SA Police camouflage is a thing of the past, officially associated with the 'apartheid' government and heavy handed storm trooper tactics. Quantities of the second pattern camouflage are creeping into the South African surplus market, discarded by policemen who no longer have need for it. Local hunters have a preference for it but it is interesting to note that the most demand for the SAP second pattern camouflage is from the people who allegedly suffered most under the old 'regime'.



Above: Velcro cuff detail of the Rhodesian manufactured South African Police first pattern camouflage shirt.



South African Police second pattern camouflage shirt with button cuffs and the SA manufacturers label.



Right: South African Police first pattern camouflage trousers, with the distinctive 'pinwheel' visible on the left leg.



Below: South African Police second pattern camouflage trousers.



Below: 'Pinwheel' detail of South African Police first pattern camouflage.



Right: South African Police second pattern camouflage detail.



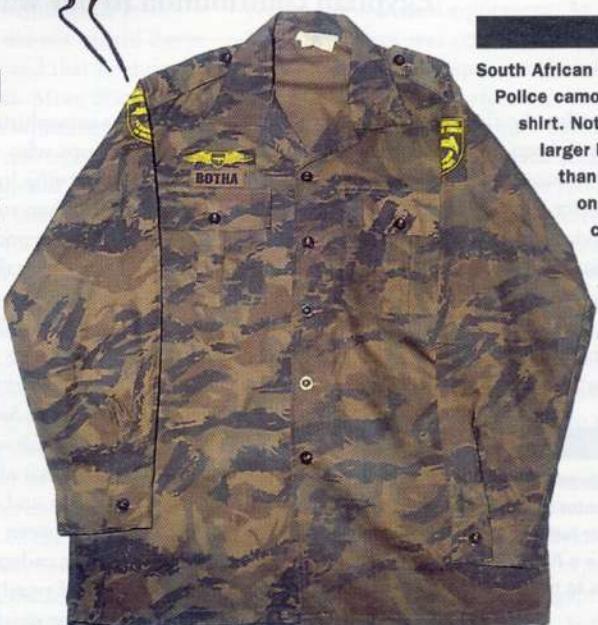
Above: South African Railway Police camouflage trousers. Note the 9mm Uzi sub-machine gun magazine pockets on the right leg and the 20rd FN/FAL magazine pocket the left.



Above: South-West African Police/Koevoet camouflage shirt. Note the small buttons and the manufacturer's label.



Above: South-West African Police/Koevoet camouflage trousers. Note the style and cut are nearly identical to that of the SAP second pattern camouflage trousers.



South African Railway Police camouflage shirt. Note the larger buttons than those used on the SAP camouflage shirts.

Left: 9mm Uzi magazine pockets located on the right leg of the South African Railway Police camouflage trousers.



# Our Egyptian Allies

British Imperial strategy in North Africa depended on maintaining a firm base in Egypt and Egyptian soldiers were expected to defend their country against the Germans and Italians, but in the chaos of war these loyalties were put to the test. DR. DAVID NICOLLE uncovers the Egyptian contribution to our war effort and its points of weakness.

Recruitment for the tiny pre-War Egyptian Army had not been a problem. There were plenty of volunteers in a poor country where military service provided regular pay and medical services. On the other hand the conscription system was very unfair and prosperous families could purchase exemption. Problems came with expansion and with the different attitude the British had towards Sudanese troops whom they

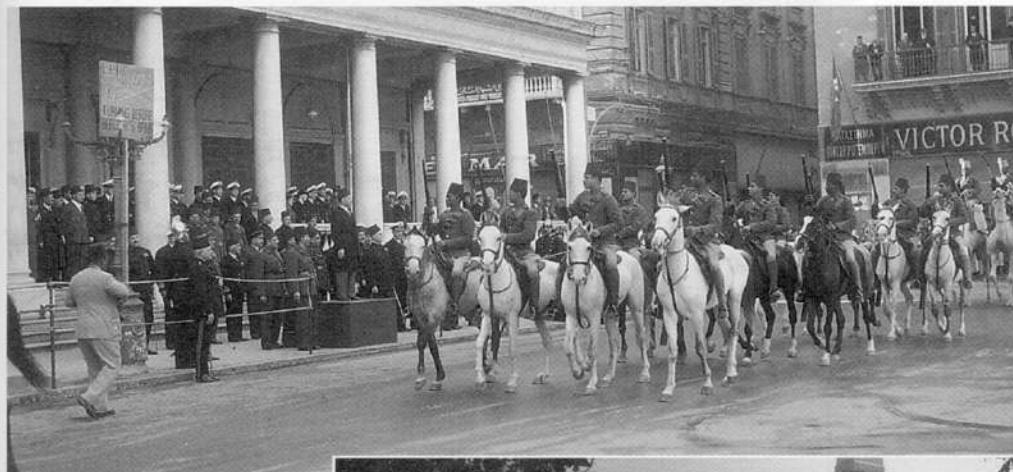
regarded as unsophisticated and loyal, and Egyptian troops who were more independent-minded while being loyal to their own country rather than to an Imperial power.

The Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936 came in the wake of the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, since Egypt clearly could not defend itself from a comparable assault. A threat to Egypt itself may have been remote but the Italians were believed to have their eyes on the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan whose seizure would link their colonies in Libya and Ethiopia. Strenuous efforts were therefore made to re-equip and retrain the Egyptian armed forces between 1936 and 1939. A new intake of officer cadets was also recruited from families of purely Egyptian backgrounds, the existing Egyptian officer

corps being dominated by men of Turkish, Circassian and Albanian ancestry. Amongst these new men were Gamal Abd al-Nasser and Anwar Sadat.

By 1939 the Egyptian Army and Air Force—there was as yet no Egyptian Navy—was structured, uniformed and equipped along British lines although there were still serious deficiencies in training and weaponry while many in Britain still doubted the wisdom of building up Egyptian strength. Nevertheless a Joint Plan for the Defence of Egypt was agreed by Lt. Gen. Maitland Wilson, the British commander in Egypt, and the Egyptian Minister of Defence shortly before the outbreak of war. Egyptians would patrol the Libyan frontier, contribute to the garrisons at Mersa Matruh and Alexandria,

**Above:** An Egyptian Bren-gun crew aboard one of the armed motor-launches which patrolled the Nile. The men wear fatigues, including a distinctive soft khaki hat like a floppy fez, while the officer on the right appears to be from the Egyptian police. (IWM photograph).



The Egyptian Army had a poor reputation amongst Allied troops during the Second World War. The elite seemed to be involved only in ceremonial duties and as a result were widely known as 'Groppy's Horse', being named after Cairo's best known ice-cream parlour. In this photograph, taken in Alexandria on the occasion of King Farouk's Birthday Parade in February 1945, cavalry from the Royal Guard are followed by men from the famous Camel Corps. Sadly their training was as old fashioned as their equipment. (IWM photograph)

The most visible role undertaken by the Egyptian Army during the Second World War was the defence of Cairo. Egyptian infantry seen here guarding the Khedive Ismail Bridge in June 1940 wear sand-coloured coverings over their traditional fezes. With a long neck-cloth at the back and a peak at the front, this was the most distinctive piece of Egyptian field uniform. (IWM photograph).

guard railways, establish a mobile force to defend the south-western approaches of Cairo, man coastal defences positions, provide anti-aircraft artillery for strategic bases and carry out anti-sabotage duties. This plan would stretch the little Egyptian Army to its limit but would free British troops for more active operations.

In August 1939, British and Egyptian units moved to their agreed positions, yet beneath the surface there was still tension. Following the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936, Egypt was no longer legally 'occupied' by Britain, but everyone knew where power really lay. Most Egyptians would have preferred their country to stay out of what was seen as somebody else's war while educated Egyptians, including many junior officers, focussed their loyalty upon Egypt and its young King Farouk. Strained loyalties could also be seen high up in the Egyptian government. Here, for example, the Minister of Defence in 1939 was Saleh Harb Pasha who, as a younger man, had been one of those officers who deserted to join the Libyan Sanussi fight the Italians in 1914; subsequently fighting alongside these Sanussi against the British. Meanwhile Prince Muhammad Ali of the Egyptian Royal Family warned the British Foreign Office that Egyptian Army morale was low and, although Egyptian troops would not defect, they might not fight. On the other hand the



outbreak of war with Italy in 1940 was received enthusiastically by Egyptian officers, many of whom wanted to invade Libya and to punish the Italians for their brutal crushing of Libyan resistance. With a greater sense of reality, the Egyptian government took British advice and merely broke off diplomatic relations with the Axis powers.

Despite the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, the Second World War years saw an effective British reoccupation of Egypt. Worse still, Winston Churchill made it abundantly clear that he did not regard Egypt as an independent nation and that he did not trust Egyptians in uniform. More discretely the British Foreign Office wrote, on 15th December 1939: 'It is no real interest of ours that the Egyptian Army should reach the maximum of efficiency in training and equipment. The danger of a hostile government or an Arabi Pasha revolt is always latent—We should lose no sleep over inefficiency in Egyptian high places or the deterioration of army material through bad officership. So long as we can place the blame on the shoulders of the Egyptians, these deficiencies are on a long view, no loss to us.'

In Egypt the behaviour of British troops got worse as the war progressed, often singing obscene parodies of the Egyptian National Anthem in public. Few Egyptians dared strike back, one of the few exceptions being when Col. Neguib—later the titular

leader of the 1952 Revolution—threw an offensive British soldier off a Cairo bus. Despite such behaviour, there was no wish for a German victory outside the small circle of extremists which included Anwar Sadat. Another young officer, Gamal Abd al-Nasser, was more typical in advocating cooperation with Britain in the hope of earning a better bargaining position once the war was over. For most of the Egyptian Army it was simply a case of 'better the devil you know.'

At the start of the war there were nine Egyptian infantry battalions in Egypt and one in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, but their training was poor. Priority was given to the anti-aircraft batteries, coastal defence artillery and a small mechanized 'cavalry' unit. According to reports by the British Advisory Mission, the Egyptian Ministry of Defence was chaotic, the discipline of the men better than that of their officers, and there was a serious shortage of both trained NCOs and technical equipment. As far as the Egyptian Palace was concerned, appearance seemed to be more important than substance, as when King Farouk refused to allow Brigadier Saif Bey, the Army's best Infantry officer, to take part in a parade celebrating a Royal marriage because he was too fat! In May 1940 all retired officers were recalled because the Egyptian Army had now grown to around five thousand men. The war had, in fact, encouraged several good officers back into the Army; including Prince Ismail Daud who was now a Cavalry Bimbashi or Major.

Senior officers were learning fast, though a handful abandoned their posts to return to the Nile Valley, while junior officers and men behaved well under fire. Most casualties were suffered by anti-aircraft batteries and by troops stationed close to the Libyan frontier. Even after the German Afrika Korps drove back the British out of Libya, Egyptian morale generally remained firm. For their

part, the British view of Egyptian troops was summed up by a Foreign Office official writing in November 1941: 'All things considered, the Egyptian Army has acquitted itself better than might have been expected.' The new Egyptian Minister of Defence Hassan Sadek had a good grasp and was helpful. The Chief of General Staff, Ibrahim Atallah, was similarly helpful and soldierly but had limited knowledge. The Inspector General Hassan Husni Zeiki had once been considered anti-British but proved to be best senior officer in the Army — helpful, energetic, capable. The Adjutant General

Muhammad Hamdi Taher was a helpful and capable disciplinarian, but the Quarter Master General Abd al-Hamid Hafiz was weak while the Director General of the Frontiers Administration was regarded as useless.

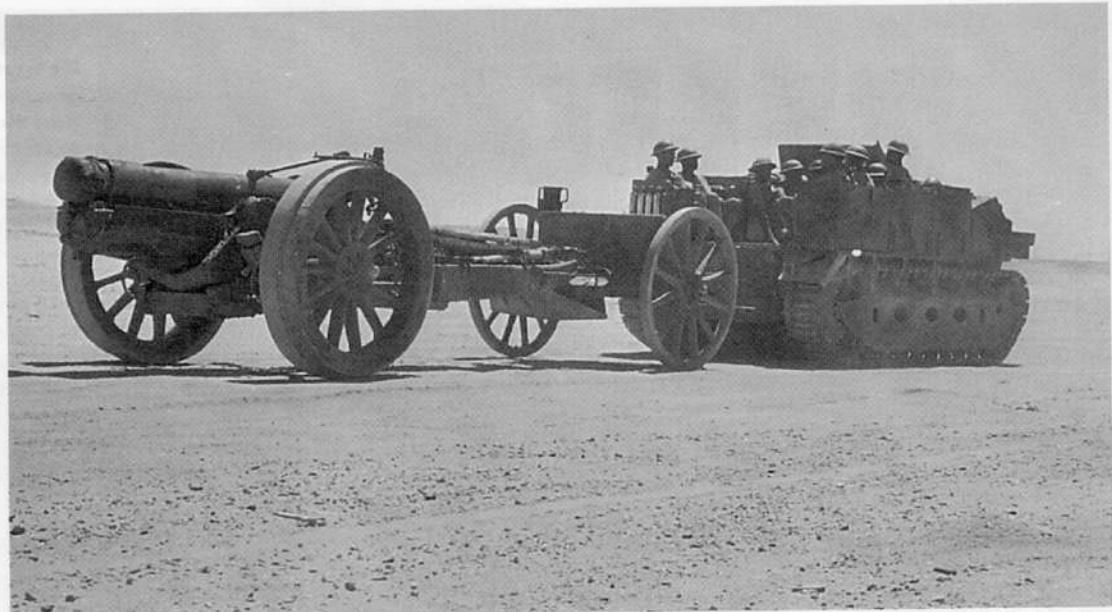
Limitations in training and equipment, as well as lingering British suspicion, meant that the bulk of the Egyptian Army was tied down in internal security duties throughout the war. Initially this involved the 1st Light Tank Regiment which, according to British reports of August 1939, was the only part of the Army which had not improved dramatically over the past few months. The 1st Light Car (mechanised but unarmoured) Regiment similarly began the war understrength and virtually untrained while the Egyptian Army even had one regiment of cavalry on horses. Egyptian infantry could, on the other hand, co-operate effectively with British forces; the 1st Brigade being stationed in Cairo, the 2nd at al-Mex and the 3rd in the fortress of Mankabad in Upper Egypt. This latter Brigade was considered the best in the Egyptian Army, with keen and efficient junior officers who included a certain young Gamal Abd al-Nasser. It was soon commanded by Saif Bey whom the British regarded as perhaps the best officer in the Egyptian Army. So much so that during one combined exercise in April 1940 Saif Bey was even given command of a mixed British and Egyptian Brigade.

The Egyptian government, however, wanted to release most of the Army for field operations, handing point defence over to a new Territorial force recruited by the fiercely nationalistic Abd al-Rahman Azzam Bey. The British were against this, perhaps being aware of the limitations of Egyptian training, and as a result the infantry continued to garrison Cairo, Alexandria, Aswan, Asyut and Dabaa. Azzam Bey's Territorials were not popular but did develop into a useful force by the summer of 1941. This was just as

well, since a series of British defeats meant that all available British troops were needed in the Western Desert. Fear of paratroopers also meant that bridges, railways and road junctions in the Delta and Nile Valley had to be defended while Cairo was thought to be vulnerable to raiders from the south-west. One infantry battalion, one cavalry 'light car' regiment, one field artillery and one anti-tank battery were therefore sent into the desert beyond the Pyramids. Meanwhile Egyptian Army engineers organised bomb disposal squads in Cairo and Alexandria.

The most vulnerable targets for air attack were the Alexandria naval base, Cairo, the Port Said oil refinery, the Suez Canal facilities and the forward base at Mersa Matruh. Several of these were defended by Egyptian anti-aircraft gunners and searchlight crews, those at Mersa Matruh now being capable of fulfilling their role without direct British supervision. In August 1939 a British report stated, apparently with some surprise, that 'the anti-aircraft regiment is really good'. Once Italy entered the war, Egyptian air defence positions were often in action and suffered quite heavy casualties; British reports noting with approval how several batteries continued firing even after being hit. The Egyptian Army similarly manned coastal defence batteries in Mersa Matruh, the Alexandria naval base and elsewhere — their task being to fend off raids by Italian Motor Torpedo Boats. But the daring of the Italian Navy made the siting of such guns very difficult and in October 1941 work was started on a new 'Barron' coastal defence system for Alexandria.

Meanwhile the most exposed Egyptian positions were in the Western Desert, sought of the main battlefields. These were largely manned by the elite Frontier Forces which, though now incorporated into the Egyptian Army, still consisted of relatively well paid volunteers. Here the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Reconnaissance Squadrons equipped with



**The guns of the Egyptian Artillery were mostly of antique vintage, though some were provided with tracked towing vehicles. The camouflaged example shown here may have formed part of Prince Ismail Daud's Mobile Force which defended the desert area south of the Qattara Depression. (IWM photograph).**

Bren Gun Carriers, and the Camel Corps which now travelled by lorry and formed a 5th Squadron, maintained an Air Observation Line deep in the desert. It proved highly effective and it was established without British assistance. Four newly trained companies of the Egyptian Army's Arab Legion were also based at Mersa Matruh, Sidi Barrani, Siwa and Bahariyah, while a company of Engineers worked on the Mersa Matruh defences.

Though they endured regular bombing raids they were regarded by the British as only suitable for static defence duties and in July 1940 the British Army requested that all Egyptian troops, except the Frontier Forces further south, be withdrawn and their equipment handed over to the British. The Egyptians were appalled and even the British government in London realised that this would cause a political storm in Cairo. Instead the Mersa Matruh Garrison was only withdrawn to Dabaa, the units at Sidi Barrani and Sollum having already been pulled back following the Italian invasion. Meanwhile the Egyptians in Siwa oasis were reinforced and placed under a highly regarded officer who had studied in the British Staff College as Camberley. He soon had four Medium Mk. II tanks under his command; their crews having been trained by the British 7th Armoured Division. This part of the Western Desert remained under Egyptian control throughout the first half of the war and frequently came under Italian air attack. In return Egyptian anti-aircraft batteries brought down several



The town of Siwa, chief village of the oasis of Siwa, seen from the air shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. This isolated outpost close to the Libyan frontier was successfully defended by Egyptian troops throughout the first part of the North Africa Campaign. (Sq Ldr I Blair photograph)



Egyptian Army training was based on First World War principles, and sometimes on ideas dating from the reconquest of the Sudan in the late 19th century. Here Egyptian infantry cross a canal near Cairo in a live-firing exercise during the Second World War. (IWM photograph).

enemy aircraft, capturing one crew while the Frontier Forces similarly captured a small number of Italian troops.

As the great battles of 1940 and 1941 raged further north, the Egyptian patrol area and the Air Observation Line also moved back and forth, though its southern terminal remained the same. In August 1941, however, the Egyptians were persuaded to hand Siwa over to the British. Its Egyptian garrison withdrew to the Gebel Asfar and Cairo for rest and retraining while another Light Car Regiment continued to patrol the area from Bahariyah Oasis to Siwa Oasis, south of the vast Qattara Depression. The vital Air Observation Line, however, continued to operate, its observers having their duties extended to the Gebel Asfar, Bahariyah, Gara, al-Alamein and Garawla-Qattara. Although the reports of this Egyptian Observer Corps were reliable, what impressed the British most was the endless patience of the Observers, isolated far out in the desert for weeks on end.

The pride of the Egyptian Army during the Second World War was undoubtedly the Mobile Force — otherwise called the South-West Force. It seems to have grown out of a British suggestion that Egypt raise an Arab bedouin corps officered by the sons of bedouin sheikhs, to defend the Western Desert Oases. This idea, based on a romantic British view of the desert which owed much to Lawrence of Arabia, was not adopted by the pragmatic Egyptians. Instead they assembled an elite formation, creaming off the best from both the Army and the Royal Egyptian Air Force. By the end of 1939 it consisted of a HQ Cavalry Brigade, a Squadron from the Light Tank Regiment, a

Machine-Gun Company, an unarmoured Light Car Regiment less one squadron, a light artillery battery with 3.7 inch howitzers, an anti-tank battery and a section of field engineers, supported by a flight of REAF Lysanders. Based at Bahariyah and Siwa oases, its unsuccessful first commander was replaced by Prince Ismail Daud. The British thought highly of Ismail Daud, despite his habit of moving around the desert with a large collection of musical records, a tent that seemed to come from an Arabian Nights theatre-set and a tendency to lay on desert banquets which had similarly stepped from the pages of an oriental romance. In fact Prince Ismail Daud proved to be very competent, yet his posting to the Mobile Force remained a sort of political punishment. His cousin, King Farouk, hated Prince Ismail Daud's outspoken pro-British sympathies and was probably behind false accusations of homosexual activities levelled at Ismail Daud later in the war.

The main enemy which Prince Ismail Daud expected to face were motorised Italian Auto Saharan Companies which, however, were designed to operate around oases rather than in the deep desert. The Mobile Force's own zone of operations consisted of some of the most inhospitable terrain of the North African campaign, the desert south of the Qattara Depression. This was where Lt General Gott, a British advocate of the indirect approach, had himself considered the possibility of an attack on Italian-held Libya. But the idea came to nothing, probably because the smooth desert floor proved liable to break up under the pressure of too many vehicles. The Italians seem to have come to the same conclusion and Prince Ismail Daud's

Mobile Force never saw more than an isolated skirmish. On the other hand the success of the Mobile Force encouraged Britain to request it to move north of the Qattara Depression and to operate in closer conjunction with British forces. Consequently it patrolled the area between Siwa and the coast from July to September 1940. As first based at Qasaba, twenty miles south-east of Mersa Matruh, it moved to Qaret al-Markaz during the Italian invasion so as to be better placed to support Siwa. But here the desert tracks could not cope with the lorry transport and so the Mobile Force had to move back to Qasaba while its men searched for a new supply route.

The fact that the Egyptian Army's Mobile Force was not placed under direct British command may be why Prince Ismail Daud's men hardly ever appear in histories of the Desert War. With the defeat of the Italian invasion, this Mobile Force returned to its original positions where, by September, it also included an Ordnance Maintenance Detachment and six Motor Transport Companies from the Army Service Corps. Thereafter the Mobile Force remained in and around Bahariyah, serving as a forward defence for Cairo in case the Germans or Italians developed anything comparable to the British Long Range Desert Group. In fact the Long Range Desert Group (LRDG) had close links with both the Sudanese Defence Force and the Egyptian Army. Formed in 1940, it borrowed its first transport from the Egyptian troops at Siwa because their lorries were better suited to deep desert work. The Egyptians also defended the oases from which the LRDG launched many daring raids into southern Libya. In return these raids

showed that the Italians in southern Libya had adopted a defensive position, thus taking the pressure off thinly spread Egyptian forces who were defending Egypt's own oases and the vulnerable Nile Valley. Sadly it was the failure of an LRDG attack on the Benghazi area which prompted the Italians to send about fifty men preceded by a single aircraft to take Siwa from its British garrison — a loss which upset the Egyptian Army which had successfully defended Siwa for so long. The fact that the British abandoned Siwa to the Italians without a shot being fired undermined Egyptian confidence in their allies still further. A motorised battalion of the Sudan Defence Force, based at Bahariyah alongside Prince Ismail Daud's Mobile Force, subsequently made a counter demonstration against the Italians in Siwa shortly before the Second Battle of al-Alamein but without result.

Before the LRDG confirmed the Italian's defensive strategy, the British military command feared an Italian airborne assault to cut the Nile Valley between Aswan and Wadi Halfa. This would have virtually severed land communications between Egypt and Sudan, so the Egyptian Army was given additional weaponry to strengthen its garrisons in Aswan and Wadi Halfa. These were placed under Kaimakam (Lt Col) Abd al-Rahmi Fahmi on 5th October 1940 and co-operated with a Light Car Squadron of the Frontier Forces operating from Kharga Oasis

and al-Shebb. This latter outpost was no more than a well on the famous Darb al-Arbayin or 'Road of Forty Days' whose line of bleached camel bones had linked southern Egypt to northern Sudan since medieval times. In June 1941 the threat seen to have passed and the Egyptian soldiers stationed at Wadi Halfa were dispersed elsewhere.

The other Egyptian garrisons in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan were in the capital of Khartoum and in Port Sudan on the Red Sea; both being drawn from the 7th and 3rd Infantry Battalions. There were also Egyptian coastal artillery at Port Sudan, to which Egyptian anti-aircraft batteries were added at the request of General Platt, commander of the Sudan Defence Force. Platt's fear of an Italian thrust northwards from Eritrea proved groundless but Port Sudan was bombed by Italian aircraft. Quite who brought down the Italian fighter which ended up in Port Sudan's central market with a patriotic collection-box next to it is, however, unclear.

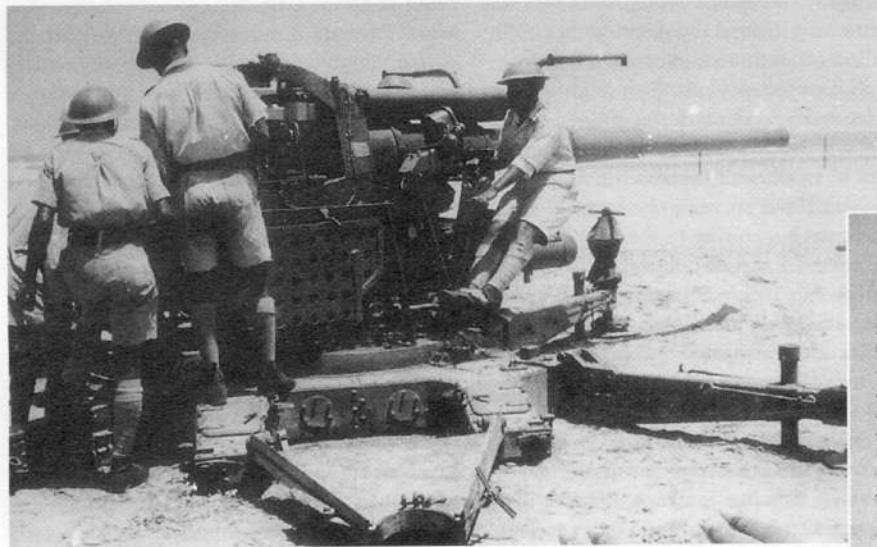
Closer to home, the 4th and 5th Egyptian Infantry Battalions formed part of the Suez Canal Zone garrisons at the start of the war. They were supported by artillery, plus anti-aircraft batteries at Suez and Port Said and the Gladiator fighters of No 2 Squadron REAF based at Suez. In August 1941 the British were under such pressure in the Western Desert that they handed the Canal Zone over to Egyptian troops. Axis air-raids

on the Suez Canal Zone were frequent with Egyptian anti-aircraft gunners suffering many casualties.

In June 1941 the enemy also started dropping mines into the waterway so the need for observation posts grew even greater, eventually involving five thousand men from an Egyptian Cavalry Regiment, ten troops of light anti-aircraft artillery, four infantry and two machine-gun battalions. The result was, according to British reports, a 'decided success' and by October that year over seventy parachute mines had been accurately located. Meanwhile Frontier Forces also patrolled the Red Sea coast and the Sinai Peninsula.

In 1940 General Aziz al-Masri, the Chief of the General Staff, retired under pressure because of his supposed pro-Axis sympathies. Though widely regarded as an interloper whose military theories were almost comically out of date, the way the British had forced Aziz al-Masri to step down was nevertheless resented by Egyptian officers. Al-Masri was not pro-Axis and was, in fact, fiercely anti-Italian, having fought as a volunteer against the Italian invasion of Libya in 1912-13. There he commanded the old Austrian mountain-gun which shot down the first enemy aircraft in the history of warfare. Subsequently he laid the foundations of an Arab Hashemite army which Lawrence of Arabia supposedly 'led' against the Turks during the First World War.

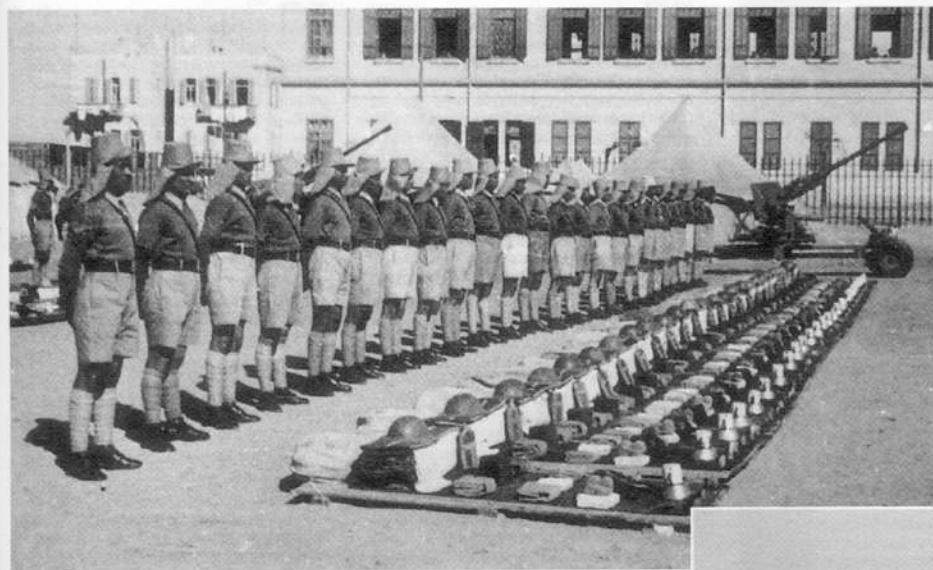
Worse was to come. In February 1942, with the British falling back before Rommel's Afrika Korps, London demanded that a new and more friendly Egyptian government be installed in Cairo. King Farouk refused and the British authorities did not feel in the mood to discuss the matter



Above: By 1945, when this photograph was taken, the Egyptian Army had the second most effective anti-aircraft artillery in the Eastern Mediterranean. Only the British, who had trained them, were considered better. (J Mason photograph)

Right: Few photographs sum up the situation of the Egyptian Army at the outbreak of the Second World War better than this page from an Egyptian news magazine. Having just acquired heavy anti-aircraft guns, the gunners were put through intensive training though did not always have the equipment they really needed.





Left: During the Second World War the Egyptian Army established mobile light anti-aircraft artillery units, several of which saw intensive action in defence of the Suez Canal. One is seen here in 1945. (J Mason photograph)

Below: Sagh (between Captain and Major) Mohammed Moneib Effendi, Kalmakam (Lt Col) Hassan Ben Rashid and Major John Mason of the British Advisory Mission in 1945. Here Hassan Ben Rashid is wearing ordinary service uniform while Mohammed Moneib is in full dress with red fez, dark khaki tunic and lighter jodhpurs. (J Mason photograph)

further. Instead they sent tanks through the Palace gates and forced the Egyptian King to do what the British Ambassador requested. Seen from a British perspective this was necessary in the circumstances, and the new government of Nahas Pasha certainly proved itself a loyal ally. But seen from an Egyptian point of view it was another example of how the British 'occupiers' treated Egypt with contempt. The Egyptian Army felt humiliated, as General Mohammed Neguib wrote to King Farouk: 'Since the Army was given no opportunity to defend your Majesty I am ashamed to wear my uniform. I hereby request permission to resign.' This was of course refused but, as Lt Gamal Abd al-Nasser who had recently returned from the Sudan wrote to a friend: 'As for the army, it has been thoroughly shaken. Until now the officers only talked of how to enjoy themselves; now they are speaking of sacrificing their lives for their honour.' This was then followed by the Black Book Crisis in which men accused of anti-British subversion were purged from the Army and Air Force. Most were associates of Aziz al-Masri who had founded the Ring of Iron, a semi-secret group within the Egyptian Army and Air Force loyal to King Farouk and dedicated to expelling the British. Believing that Britain would lose the war, they wanted Egypt to obtain the best possible terms from the Germans. Other influential members were Gen Neguib, Abd al-Rahman Zaki, Director General of the Egyptian Ministry of Defence, and Sayid Mahmud Taha who commanded the Alexandria garrison. On the other hand the majority of Egyptian officers supported the Allied cause and even those who did not feel that al-Masri and supporters including Anwar Sadat had gone too far by making contact with German intelligence agents. Like Gamal Abd al-Nasser they believed it was in Egypt's best interests to help the Allies win and so earn greater influence once the war was over.

While the Egyptian Armed Forces were pre-occupied with such political problems in

Cairo, Montgomery won the second battle of al-Alamein. The final years of the Second World War now saw the Egyptian Army pull itself back from a situation of subversion and near disgrace to one in which its limited capabilities were

wholly dedicated to defeating the Axis powers. On 12th November 1942 enemy forces were driven out of Egypt and the final Allied victory in Tunis in 1943 was followed by celebration parties in Egyptian as well as British officers' messes. The first half of that year saw a notable increase in co-operation between Egyptian and British forces. The Egyptian government remained co-operative and even King Farouk seemed more helpful than usual. Yet old political problems soon resurfaced. In Port Sudan, for example, the British wanted Egyptian anti-aircraft units to be withdrawn whereas the Egyptian government wanted them to stay and reinforce the Egyptian presence in Sudan. Egyptian infantry continued to garrison the Suez Canal Zone and were also responsible for defending the vital water pipeline along the Mediterranean coast. Since April 1943 Egyptians had manned balloon barrages and other defences around Allied airfields in the Nile Delta. These were more important than they might sound since the Germans had beaten the British in a race to take control of the ex-Italian Dodecanese Islands in the Aegean. As a result the Luftwaffe continued to send reconnaissance flights over Egypt well into 1944.

Nevertheless there was a widespread feeling that the Egyptian Army should have been allowed to do more, followed by a great desire to learn from the British. In reality,



however, the Egyptian Army went back to tedious traditional tasks such as pursuing drug smugglers across the desert, stopping bedouin pilfering desert supply dumps, manning coastal defence and anti-aircraft batteries, garrisoning Alexandria and Port Sudan. Meanwhile Egyptian Army Engineers began the monumental task of mine-clearance — a task they are still doing today even in the Second World War battlefields of the Western Desert. In 1944 the Arab Legion units of the Egyptian Frontier Forces were disbanded and the Observer Corps was absorbed into the Camel Corps. The Frontier Brigade's zone of responsibility was extended to include the Capuzzo area of Libya, thus becoming the only Egyptian unit to serve outside Egypt or the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. The Mobile Force had been disbanded and Prince Ismail Daud was now in command of a rather less exciting anti-malarial campaign in Upper Egypt. On 24th February 1945 a new Egyptian government declared war on Germany and within weeks of the end of the war Egyptian troops became responsible for guarding thousands of German prisoners of war held in Egypt. Unlike these men, however, the Egyptian Army would be thrown into a new conflict only three years later — the Palestine War or Israeli War of Independence where its deficiencies would become more apparent than they ever had in World War Two.

# Militaria

There are questions over the future of the Pattern Room at Nottingham. This is one of, if not the, best reference collection of modern firearms in the world and the Ministry of Defence seems to be considering scrapping it. Firearms being very much out of favour, it is not going to be of much use seeking support from the public. However collectors and enthusiasts are urged to keep an eye on the news and oppose any efforts to close this unique collection.

Planning a timetable for the year's auctions is a matter of fine judgement. It is as well to know when one's rivals are holding theirs. Does one hold yours near that date on the basis that the dealers, especially the overseas ones, will be in town and so be more likely to attend? On the other hand dealers and collectors have only a limited cash reserve to spend and they may well spend it at the other sales. This being so they may make a choice and skip one of the sales.

Last December, Bosley's had another bumper sale with over 12,000 lots including medals, uniforms, weapons, books and headdress. As always the catalogue was well produced and presented. The descriptions are very full and this must increase confidence among those who cannot attend the sale and have to bid by post or telephone. The first section comprised badges, helmet plates and similar items. The first lot rather set the trend for much of the sale for it was an officer's shoulder belt plate of the 63rd Foot (West Suffolk) Regiment dating from around 1830 and it sold for £580. Another shoulder belt plate of the 72nd Highlanders (Duke of Albany's) Regiment was knocked down at £550. This strength of bidding continued through most of the badge section and it is obvious that interest in British Army badges continues to flourish and prices look set to rise even more. Even the humble

military button looks set to acquire a higher collectors' priority as lots of these were selling at prices which suggested a price of around £4-£5 each.

There was an unusual group of swagger sticks carried by members of various regiments and college Officer Training Corps. They sold at prices ranging from £18 up to £75 but the top price of £450 was for a gold mounted example of His Majesty's Customs dating from 1892. One surprise was the prices paid for 19th century truncheons. At one time these were little considered but in this sale they achieved prices of £150 up to £550 for a metal one from Bristol. This may be indicating a growing interest in police material that so far has not been popular with collectors. World War I recruiting posters also did very well with three selling well above estimates at £150, £165 and £180.

Top price of the sale was for a trumpet banner of the Household Cavalry, which had been presented to the Commanding Officer on his retirement in 1873. Estimated at £750 to £1000 it reached £2,800. The pre-sale estimates for a group of World War I gas hoods were also passed in some strong bidding. The use of the Germans of poison gas in World War I caught the Allies guessing and a variety of hoods and respirators were hastily produced and this little group had belonged to a private of the Royal Engineers who served with the Chemical Warfare unit. Estimated at £300-£400 the first went for £1,500 and another put at £500-£750 made £1,100. The auctioneers reported a keen interest in aviation material that of late had seemed rather in the doldrums. Their optimism was reflected in the price paid for a standard issue World War II flying helmet and oxygen mask. Some years ago these were on sale at places such as street markets and surplus stores at a

few pounds. This one made £250.

In an unusual clash, Sotheby's Billinghurst also had a sale on the same day in December but if there was any interaction is hard to say. A Turkish helmet of the mid 16th century sold for a good £42,200 and another similar made £41,100. A mid 19th century silver mounted Highland dress garniture nearly doubled its estimate and sold for £21,850.

On the 12th December, Christie's held a sale of arms and armour and the quality of the lots was extremely high and the prices matched the items. The catalogue, like that of Bosley's was very nicely produced and illustrated a number of extremely fine helmets that always attract high bids. An extremely rare visored, sallet dating from the mid 16th century was estimated at £40,000 to £60,000. Its condition and rarity attracted the top armour dealers and collectors and soon the bidding

was past the estimate and did not stop until it had cost the buyer £106,000. Another helmet this time for the tilt and probably the work of one of the most famous of armourers Anton Peffenhauser was estimated at £6,500 to £8,500. Its condition, quality and rarity soon pushed the bidding past these figures and the hammer fell at £25,800.

A superb sword dating from around 1400 was probably looted by the Muslims when they captured Cyprus in 1426. Many of these weapons were placed in the arsenal at Alexandria and this is recorded in an inscription on the blade. Purchased in 1952 probably for a few pounds it sold for £38,900. Another sword of the 9th century was estimated at £8,000 to £12,000 but sold for £21,850. There was firm interest in cased percussion revolvers and pistols with a cased pair by the famous Joseph Manton selling at £3,680. In all it was an extremely successful sale.

Frederick Wilkinson

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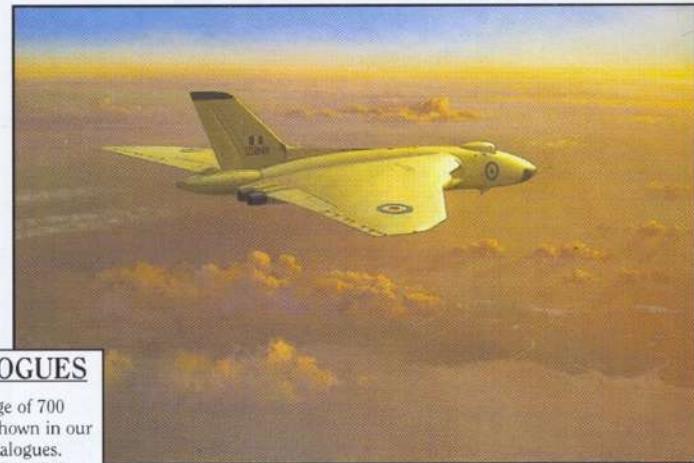
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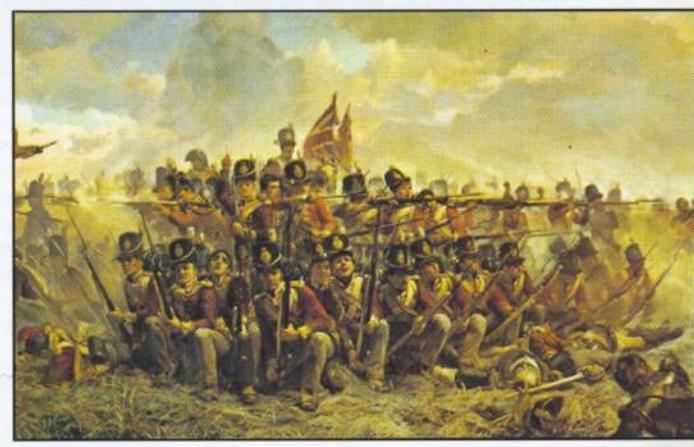
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